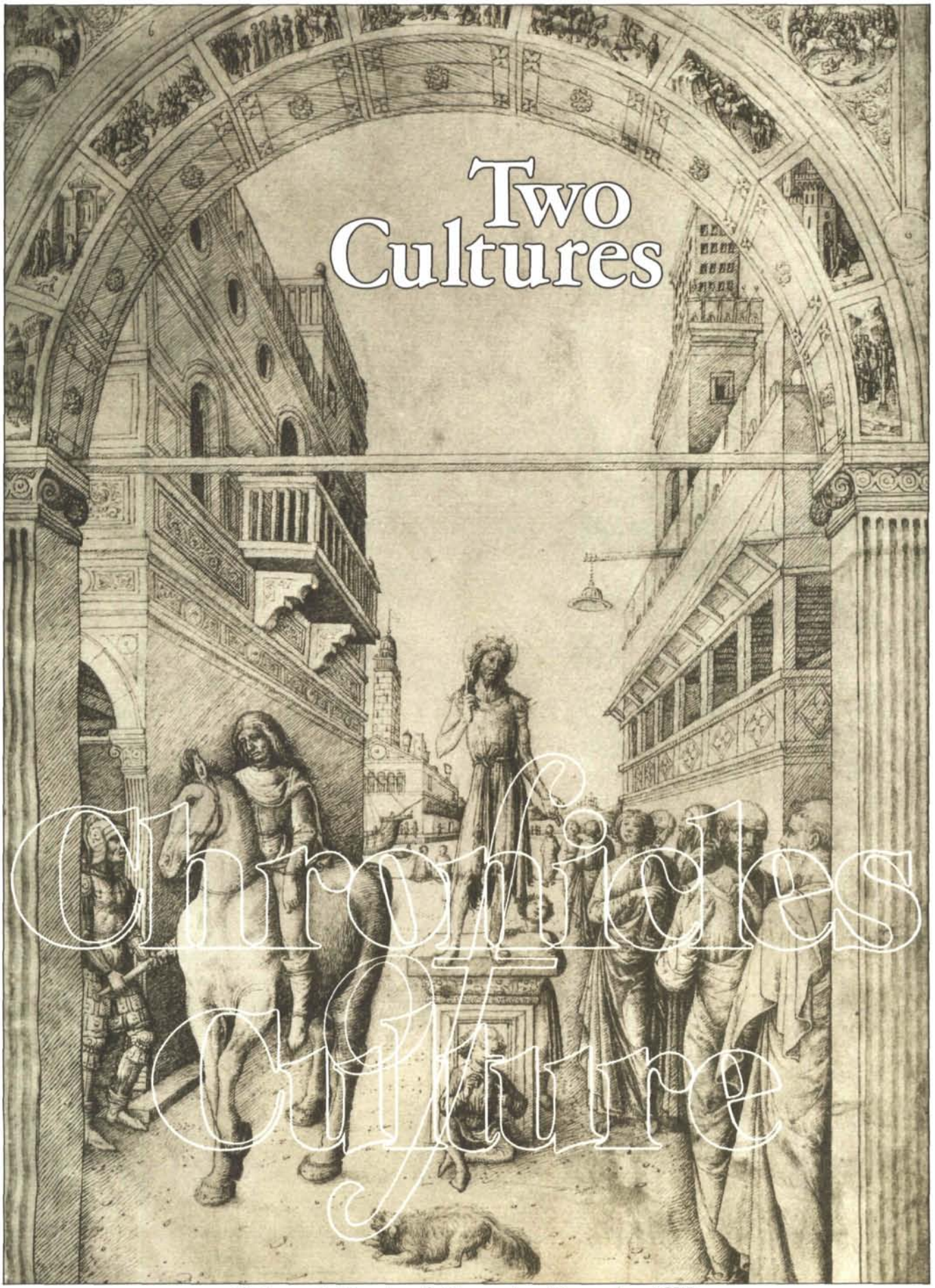

# Two Cultures

## Chronicles of Culture

Volume 3, Number 6, November/December 1979

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# Contents


4 Editor's Comment — Leopold Tyrmand

**Opinions & Views**

8 *Moujik* 'n' Pulp Sandwich — Lev Navrozov
—William Styron: *Sophie's Choice*

12 Lord Snow on Art & Life — Dain A. Trafton
—C.P. Snow: *The Realists*

13 Private Part as Thing — Joseph Schwartz
—Kingsley Amis: *Jake's Thing*

16 Deciding What's Bias — James Hitchcock
—Herbert Gans: *Deciding What's News*

18 Truths and Images — Becki Klute
—Juliana Geran Pilon: *Notes from the Other Side of Night*

19 The Way It Was — Edward J. Walsh
—Tim O'Brien: *Going after Cacciato*

21 Modern Liberals & Intellectual Storm Troopers — Paul Gottfried
—Alvin Gouldner: *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class*
Harvey Mansfield: *The Spirit of Liberalism*

24 Port-Wine Conservatism — Otto J. Scott
—Benjamin A. Rogge: *Can Capitalism Survive?*

26 Too Good to Be True — Alan J. Levine
—Sir John Hackett, et al.: *The Third World War*

28 The Untold Teller — H. Peter Metzger
—Edward Teller: *Energy from Heaven and Earth*

29 Evil and a Large Economic Unit — Harold C. Gordon
—Robert Hessen: *In Defense of the Corporation*

**Commendables**

30 Borges' Solitude — Mary Ellen Fox
—Emir Rodriguez Monegal: *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography*

**In Focus**

31 An Empty Mosaic: *Sleepless Nights*

**Waste of Money**

31 Erlichman's Cynical Naiveté: *The Whole Truth*
Only in America: *Martha: The Life of Martha Mitchell*

**Stage**

32 Ineptitude as Manifesto
—Israel Horovitz: *The Primary English Class*

**Screen**

33 Not-All-Too-Bad Kids and Inept Blasphemy — Eric Shapearo
—*Breaking Away*
—*Peppermint Soda*
—*Monty Python's Life of Brian*

**Music**

34 Truth Through the Art of Riff — Douglas A. Ramsey
—Josef Skvorecky: *The Bass Saxophone*

**Art**

35 *Petit* Man in a Derby: Toulouse-Lautrec in Chicago

36 The Freedom of Self-Expression

**Correspondence**

36 Letter from Italy: The Loveliness of Timelessness — Thomas Molnar

38 Letter from New Orleans: Preservation Hall, Its Septuagenarians and Consequences — E. Stake Salisbury

**The American Proscenium**

39 The Visit

40 The Brigade—An Anniversary

41 Kennedy

**Journalism**

41 Who Makes News?
Open and Triumphant Procommunism

42 Apocalypse Now!

**Liberal Culture**

42 Rebellion as Usual—*Chicago Tribune's* Darling—Welcome Aboard!

43 Lovable Cultism—Strange Days . . . —Finally, We're All There!





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# Two Cultures

**Chronicles of Culture** is published bimonthly by the Rockford College Institute, 5050 East State Street, Rockford, Illinois 61101; Director: John Howard; Editor: Leopold Tyrmand; Publishing Manager: Richard A. Vaughan; Editorial Assistant: Becki Klute; Printed by Wilson-Hall Co.; Cover: "Predicazione di S. Giovanni" by Jacopo Bellini (1424-1470), from the MacLeish Collection, The Rare Print Cabinet, Rockford College Library; Original vignette by Warren Chappell.

ISSN: 0163-1187

The opinions expressed in the publications of the Rockford College Institute do not necessarily reflect the policies or judgments of Rockford College.



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# Editor's Comment

I am occasionally reminded (some would say warned), by people whom I respect, that the *Chronicles'* polemical tone carries a seed of zealotry. This may result, say those who remind me, in unreflective rejections. If this is the case, we must have misguided some messages, as narrow partisanship was never our ambition. We do not want to become a cause of showdowns, in either word or deed. But we do want to stir intellectual emotions.

With the '70s close to ending, we feel that the fissures of the last two decades must somehow be defined in ideological categories. The liberal/conservative dichotomy, imprecise as it is, befits those categories. These days, a liberal is one who has no qualms in accepting that everything around him is deteriorating into what he sees as a better world; the conservative stands aghast at the sight of everything improving for the worse. Along these lines of confusion, there is slowly emerging a rift between two cultures which may determine the future of this country.

The duality of culture within a society or nation was noticed already by the Greeks—the inventors of both democracy and snobbery, plebeian sloganeering and cultural sophistication. Ever since, sages and socialites have been talking about culture and folklore, court culture and the vulgar one, high- and low-brow, pop or mass culture. These are well-documented distinctions, but not always valid. The Middle Ages witnessed a situation when an intense Christianity transcended borderlines and different tastes: Gregorian chants moved to tears the feudal squire and his serfs alike; both the lowborn and the knight admired Giotto, Cimabue and the Chartres Cathedral. The dual cultural pattern was ideologically delineated at the peak of the Renaissance by Castiglione in *The Courtier,* but it was susceptible to perversions. Early romanticism fed on folk legends only to fashion attitudes of modish melancholy quite alien to the bustling reality of early capitalism. Karl Marx turned his socioeconomic teachings into a moral proposition; it was soon transformed into a morality play, and as such is still staged in university halls and the Central Park West salons of the wealthy. Bertolt Brecht and René Clair created great art from proletarian street ballads, only to contribute to the most high-brow cultural contents, though it would be unfair to claim that their consumption was limited to millionaires' drawing rooms. Abstract painting found its way onto Woolworth's neckties. D. H. Lawrence, a coal miner's son, wished to speak about the conscience of the common Englishman, only to become the minion of literary gourmets. With television in almost every American household, the demierudite tube priests daily convey high-brow cultural concepts, dry-roasted and prepackaged according to the liberal recipe. The end effect is once again confusion: truckers debate Freud and Sartre in turnpike diners without even knowing it, Mahler is passed on to the masses via movie scores, and telephone installers look as if they have just come from Vidal Sassoon. Thus, the ideological ivory tower in which the court culture still seems to be ensconced is social conscience and revolution: dreams about utopian justice achieved through violence, upheaval and blood in the gutters remain the single exclusivity which the masses have left to the literati and cognoscenti. If the contemporary American farmer or worker is quite able to acculturate himself to every fad and antic of the establishment, the one he refuses to ape is its craving for fuzzy idealism at someone else's expense, one that is rooted in self-hatred, neuroses and psychic debilitations.

Court culture was not always radical; most often it was supercilious, exclusive, contemptuous or just enamored with dimwitted mendacities (*bergerettes* in the *Petit Trianon*). The last 200 years have seen a variety of oddities: 18th-century Jacobin bankers from New York City, populist terrorists of patrician wealth from Massachusetts *(vide* the latest trenchant description and analysis of them in Otto Scott's *Secret Six),* Anita McCormick Blaine from Chicago squandering the International Harvester fortune to support Henry Wallace and communist papers, and the latest California "radical chic" which makes procommunist stars and movie moguls (the Fondas, MacLaines, Beattys, Altmans, et al.) pour their millions into the cultural advance machine for revolution. And the masses refuse to follow. The promiscuously fondled social conscience reached its climax on the infamous cover of the *New York Review of Books*—an organ of high-brow cultural elitism: it featured a diagram for how to make a Molotov cocktail for the benefit of the liberal establishment's sons and daughters at Ivy League schools who might have felt like bombing a bank or a precinct. Thereby, the court culture of the USA has reached the depths of degeneracy. Its decay is hastened by journalistic maggots who permeate the new pop-mass cultural amalgam of the '70s with venom and insanity—and a letter to the editor can now begin: "I am a normal 19-year-old bisexual woman . . ."

Not long ago, Lord Snow declared that court/elite culture versus folk/pop culture is an ancient story, whereas the duality now rests on the basis of science posited against the humanities. Mathematicians of genius know all about the metaphysics of nuclear physics but have never read one word of Kafka. This has its cause in the monstrous effort necessary for specialization in our epoch. However, even if there's merit to this argument, I doubt that it conditions the cultural reality in which we live. And this reality is definitely dichotomous. Whether we like it or not, we must call the two opposing cultures liberal and conservative. Thus, the crucial questions are: What are their similarities and differences? Where is the epicenter of cultural power in today's America? Who holds the levers? How are the gears operated?



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These are difficult questions, devoid of any common denominator. Gulf & Western is a mammoth corporation which should stand for capitalism, profits and a free market. Yet its subsidiaries—publishing houses, record companies, Paramount Pictures—publish books, sell albums and make movies which present capitalism as Satan's invention and openly desire its instant demise. This is nothing extraordinary, as Gulf & Western is also a *liberal* conglomerate, whose leaders believe in culture as a bazaar of ideas, where cultural and moral values should float freely and win or lose according to the laws of the market. Under these conditions, cultural commodities earn money—and Gulf & Western is primarily interested in money. Since social conscience is the foremost money-making proposition these days, economy and ethics happily readjust one another in Gulf & Western's boardroom philosophy, and no spiritual conflict threatens the minds of its top managers. Now, there are many corporate giants which are both utterly liberal and into culture. Together with the liberal eminentos, they form the liberal cultural establishment which rules the liberal culture. Whether their opposite is either organized, traditional religion, or a particular and solitary American who believes that culture (and its sway over daily life) should be value-oriented and related to the cultural riches of our heritage—the outcome of the power game is quite obvious. The liberal culture just engulfs the American culture.

Which, of course, means suppression of the adversary culture. Suppression? In democratic America, where everybody can, thanks to the First Amendment, express his views? No one prohibits anybody from publishing a book, making a movie, launching a TV station. That's true, but in our complex, technotronic social reality, an idea, a defense of a value, or an alternate view is not a matter of expression but of visibility, audibility, dissemination. The media are the modern passkey to human consciousness and they are overwhelmingly dedicated to the liberal culture. That is—the media are committed body and soul to the idea of progress toward an endlessly inferior world. The liberals, proud of their nonconformism, have rebelled against hypocrisy over the centuries; now their rebellion has become an orthodoxy, saturated with hypocrisy, and anybody who *now* rebels against their cant is branded a bigot and made the object of either ridicule or stony silence. The liberal media will never be interested in the puzzling circumstance of why the anti-ERA movement is a women's movement. The liberal orthodoxy has only malignant epithets for it instead of explanations.

The official stand of the liberal culture is that its adversary is culturally inferior. The liberal worldview *only* is declared respectable, and the culture engendered by it auspicious, wise, worthy of attention. But is that so? Even if conservatives and traditionalists command the allegiance of more minds and souls in America (and we don't know if that is the case, since the pollsters are reluctant to let conservative scholars formulate their questionnaires), the media will always make it invisible: they know how to do it. *Time* refuses to print, in its "Letters to the Editor" column, any intelligent rebuff of its liberal biases, favoring instead inarticulate and doltish ones, giving them an instant yahoo imprint by innuendo. The media are masters of tokenism: prominent among the exceptions are William Buckley (he's a yachtsman, an author of spy novels and his wife is photographed in *Women's Wear Daily),* some neoconservatives (Kristol, for he was once a liberal, thus a black sheep), Emmett Tyrrell (he sticks out his tongue at the liberals and they've just noticed it), Marabel Morgan and Anita Bryant (because their unsophistication is so easy to mock), Phyllis Schlafly (because she's so difficult to refute that it's easier to badmouth her), William Safire (because he draws money from the *New York Times,* what a feat for a nonliberal). But to reduce the conservative cultural force to a handful is a fraud, particularly when Marabel and Anita are pushed as standard bearers, as they constantly are. The open liberal hatred of the nonliberal substance makes them quickly banish other names. Why does *Time* never quote Russell Kirk, an historian? Why doesn't the *New York Times* register the existence of Eric Voegelin, Gerhart Niemeyer, Thomas Molnar—all eminent and prolific philosophers of culture, whose profundity of views equals if not surpasses the top official theorists of the liberal culture? Why are Robert Nisbet and James Hitchcock—both incisive commentators on modern culture and its trends, whose intellectual potential could energize universities—never asked for a comment by *Newsweek,* the *Washington Post* and CBS, as Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. constantly are? Why do ABC and *The New Republic* never refer to Reed Irvine, one of the most

### *Philosophy in America*

"O philosophy, thou guide of life, O thou explorer of virtue and expeller of vice!"

*—Cicero, 45 B.C.*

A female pundit in the *Village Voice,* the ideological organ of those for whom a mattress and stereo set together form culture, reflects on the Pope, his visit and the larger horizons of human experience:

"... religion is the genitals of the mind ...."

Wow! It beats Duns Scotus, Spinoza and Pascal! You can bet that Aquinas, that fascist, never thought of that .... □



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logical, clear-thinking, and persuasive publicists in America, or Arnold Beichman—one of the most captivating ones? Has any reader of *Esquire* or *Nation* ever heard anything about the distinguished American philosophers Albert Jay Nock or Frederick Wilhelmsen? Why is it that the only opinion on hard-working small businessmen comes from Burbank, or Manhattan, where smart alecks are making fortunes by turning the moral satisfactions of decent, hard work into a rat race by means of derisive one-liners? Everybody knows that Goldwater is a conservative, but nobody knows that Faulkner was our greatest conservative writer. We are sternly instructed by the press and show biz that love is a liberal idea, and faithfulness a conservative one. But is love not ennobled by faithfulness? By preaching anticapitalism and chintzy hedonism in the same breath, the liberal culture has lost any title to the moral representation of hard-working, law-abiding, normalcy-and-common-sense-craving America. However, the near monopoly of cultural means, to which the liberals cling by the almost totalitarian method of ignoring voices of protest, endows them with impunity.

Which makes the two-culture syndrome in America a rigid system of oppression that facilitates and justifies every abuse. To some, it may seem amusing that punk rock, with all its beastly imbecility, caters to the elite and court culture, while the music of Arthur Fiedler serves the plain folk. These paradoxes are at the core of fateful social aberrations. Tremendous amounts of money accumulate in the hands of those who will use it for cultural endeavors unconcerned with the future of *our* civilization. The pristine conviction that social and cultural power are still in the hands of the old financial establishment is an illusion. The cultural, thus the political, standards are now ordained by what some call the New Class. In the early '50s, plenty of brainy and fiercely liberal, if not outrightly radical-minded people, scared stiff by McCarthy, went from politics into professions—labor law, publishing, etc. Within two decades, they had monopolized the opinion-making apparatus of the country, and gathered fabulous wealth along the way. But their allegiances remained the same, and today a certain Mr. Weiss, a mining tycoon, is financing the Institute for Policy Studies, an overtly procommunist research center. Professions whose social basis was the bohemian left (stage setting, fashion photography, sound engineering, etc.) have become sources of financial opulence and keep "creatively" interacting with the liberal culture and politics. The critics of the New Class, like Irving Kristol, locate it mostly in the academe, bureaucracy, the media; but what about the weight of all that money for liberal left causes that comes from the superaffluent Hollywood cameramen or radical disc jockeys?

Some time ago, one could read in the *New York Times* "Book Section" that *now* ideas matter, that intellectual movements are *now* influencing politics—Moynihan became a U.N. ambassador in the wake of one essay, Carter was advised to read *The Culture of Narcissism* before preparing a speech. But hasn't it always been so? Didn't ideas always generate political events, only in slower sequence than today—the era of Telex and communication satellites? Aren't the TV anchormen and press editorialists just the tom-toms of the modern idea producer, only quicker in transmitting the watchword to immense audiences? The high-brow culture enamored by radicalism has been a particular beneficiary of this rapid change. And, consequently, that culture has become the source of the infectious moral and social bankruptcy of our time, the modern symbiosis of court and pop culture has turned into the wellspring of our woes.

This brings us to perhaps the fundamental difference between *their* culture and *ours*. Great art, poetry, music, or literature comes from the struggle against the real enemies of mankind: conquest, subjugation, death, cruelty, ignorance, insanity. It never originates in bantering with minor afflictions, discomforts, boredoms, frustrations, artificially inflated social "sufferings." An epoch in which there's no fight for that which meets with the approval of the common folk engenders a minor culture which mirrors trivia and whose reflections are easily forgotten. When contention is moot because everything is permitted, no creativity flourishes. The liberal culture of today seems precisely in such shape. A reigning culture that pushes books which are nothing but extensions of newspapers is inferior; thus—when faced with cultural propositions that speak of moral discipline—it must crush the latter's superiority by totalitarian means. When Pope John Paul II, who clearly belongs to the contemporary, nonliberal culture, preaches antiviolence and antipoverty, but culls his spiritual force from principle, tradition, fidelity to canon, he must be denounced, for he exposes the liberal culture's mushiness and he proves that humane goals and progress can be found in a conservative impulse. Every

### *Literature in America*

In *The New Yorker* magazine, for more than half a century an oasis of delicate literary finesse, we now find a tone of lyricism more personal than even that of the egocentric poets of yesteryear:

> "Parting the slit in the front of his underwear, he sent his urine in an arch out onto the frozen ground. It glittered in the moonlight."

It's no longer her hair or lips, a nightingale or a rose bush, that glitter in the moonlight. How could *The New Yorker,* that prince of style, be outdistanced in the field of modern prose? □



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ruling set of values which upholds its unassailability by administrative and bureaucratic means begins to rot first in arts and letters—precisely because they are privileged and protected. The liberals in America have not yet attained the Soviet style of protectionism, but a special tariff for the liberal twaddle became a rule of cultural life in America in the '60s and '70s. Updike, Didion, Vonnegut, the Hollywood radical cinema may be only occasionally and mildly admonished by the liberal interpreters, but never meaningfully criticized, dissected, evaluated. The formal shortcomings may be pointed out, their philosophy—never. No one may ask what the Cheevers, Styrons, Vidals, Hellers et al., have ever given to America, to mankind, to their fellow man—except for literary smartness, cynicism touted as inquiry, desperate mannerism, pharisaical or sanctimonious depressiveness, lascivious pseudomelancholy and modish etiolation of characters. The fertile Americanism of the Hemingways, Sinclair Lewises, O'Haras, has been abandoned amidst the coquettish squeaks of self-hatred. The old naturalism used to proclaim: "Look how it really is! Isn't it terrible?"; the neonaturalism of the Mailers and Baldwins now says: "Look how it really is! Isn't it cute, interesting, amusing, etc.?" Hope, dynamics, respect for the dignity and heroism of the other, indeed, the entire democratic pluralism recedes before the onslaught of the neurotic phobias of the other, and capitulates to the other's freakishness. No one knows any longer in whose name cultural facts are praised or condemned. Is there any moral or intellectual yardstick still around? If nonliberal critics condemn a Cheever or a Didion, they know why they do it. But what are the liberal culture's normative criteria? In Time, Inc.'s in-house leaflet, we can find a clue to *Time* magazine's critical ethics, as its foremost literary critic, R. Z. Sheppard, elucidates on the subject: " 'When I write,' he explains, 'it's just me and the book. I have two basic responsibilities to an author: to try to understand his purpose, and to evaluate how well he succeeds. The reviewer's third responsibility,' he [Sheppard] adds, 'is to be absolutely clear and accessible to the reader.' " Thereby, Sheppard tells us that if he had to review Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf,* he would have praised it to the skies: Hitler's purpose was easily understandable, he perfectly succeeded in articulating his message, and Sheppard would have had no trouble in conveying it clearly and accessibly to his readers. End of *Time* magazine book critic's responsibilities.

In contrast to the cultural ethos of *Time* and its Sheppards, central to *our* culture is permanence and an orderly hierarchy of values. For instance: the individual's moral obligation and responsibility toward another person, community, society, nation, toward civilization and its laws, traditions, institutions. The immanence of human bonds in cultural facts is the norm of our judgment of those facts—ideas, trends, books, movies, intellectual inquiries, etc. These bonds are for us the source of mankind's two most precious concepts: freedom and human dignity. It seems to us rather evident that liberal ideas, as they are embodied in the culture engendered by them and created daily by the American cultural production, are neither willing nor able to defend and sustain human dignity; about freedom, they mean something different than we do. During the 20th century, the idea of social equality celebrated countless triumphs: in America, for one, things once accessible only through birth privilege or money —plenty of food, abundant leisure, factual political leverage —have become standard. But freedom and dignity were trampled in Auschwitz and in Gulags; and in the same socially successful America, the vulgarization, depersonalization and dehumanization of private life nowadays reduce them both to mockery. Thus, the defense of freedom and human dignity has become the gist of the conflict between *their* culture and *ours.*

* * *

We all feel confused and benumbed, sensing the loss of the center on which we can safely hang our ideals, beliefs and preferences. We all feel the urge to defend cultural goods, we sense a sort of salvation—general and private—in upholding them; we vaguely realize that this salvation begins *there,* in the cultural climate, not in economics, politics or social solutions. Many do not understand the cultural and spiritual dimension of our predicament: the average American has never been confronted with this interpretation of his malaise; he used to leave it to schools, churches, political and social arrangements which were supposed to give him sloganlike explications. Then, television, with its power of smirking insouciance, overshadowed them all. The average American does not realize that the breakdown of sexual conventions means not only that people can do to their bodies what they wish, but that sooner or later, it entails the collapse of everything built on rule, custom, tradition, even the social contract itself; that it ultimately cancels both human warmth and those bondings on which his sense of life rests.

So we, in these pages, are trying to express our protest by judging the other culture. Like every protest of those who are deliberately ignored, ours can also be denounced as shrill and overwrought. But is it? We do our best to debunk the false greatness fabricated by the liberal culture and, now and then, a good man or woman or thought, transmogrified into an icon by the omnipotent liberal establishment and sycophancy, gets hurt. But we do not fling mud, not even unsubstantiated charges; we do not indulge in self-serving showiness; we do not desecrate anybody's symbols. We just respectfully disagree with or simply laugh at our adversaries. Anything else would be incompatible with the most cherished precepts of *our* culture.

—*Leopold Tyrmand*



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## Opinions & Views

# *Moujik* 'n' Pulp Sandwich

**William Styron: *Sophie's Choice;* Random House; New York.**

by Lev Navrozov

Mr. William Styron was born in Virginia, served in the Marine Corps, studied at Duke University. The narrator of *Sophie's Choice* was born in Virginia, served in the Marine Corps, studied at Duke University. He is also a novelist. He is introduced to us by his school nickname "Stingo." It is safe, therefore, to assume that Mr. Styron and Stingo are two different persons. However, Mr. Styron may be a whimsical ironist who has created a parody on the novel, and called this parody *Sophie's Choice,* allegedly written by a certain Stingo. For it begins to loom, in even an innocent perception, from its very first paragraph that the book is a parody. At the age of 22 Stingo found that:

> "...the creative heat which at eighteen had nearly consumed me with its gorgeous, relentless flame had flickered out to a dim pilot light registering little more than a token glow in my breast, or wherever my hungriest aspirations once resided."

This is how some humorless schoolchildren all over the world, or some adult workers in the literary courses of the Likhachov Automobile Plant, Moscow, write their novels: they believe that a writer expresses himself in clichés borrowed "from the best" in literature. They have not yet chosen an old or a modern writer to imitate: this scourge of literary mediocrity will come later. For the time being they still imitate literature. Wishing to say that their passion for writing is gone, they feel duty bound to juxtapose a "gorgeous relentless flame" against a "dim pilot light." The high school, or creative writing course, tyro does not know what banality is. Literature to him is the ability to form clichés that contrast with everyday life or speech.

It is sufficient to open the book anywhere to see that Stingo has this ability to an uncanny degree; if a girl's eyes implore Stingo to believe her, they implore him "with the despairing plea of an innocent prisoner protesting her virtue before the bar." A Russian novelist friend of mine once compiled a glossary of the most hackneyed phrases in the world. *Sophie's Choice* would have been a treasure trove for him. When Stingo wrote (Stingo explains), his characters "seemed to acquire life of their own." Wishing to explain how deeply a girl loved music, he says that she loved music as much as one loves food. And he adds a cluster of literary elegancies: the "availability of music alone, she said, filled her insides with a sense of delectation, as one feels just before what one knows will be a sumptuous meal."

Anyway, I will refer to the author of *Sophie's Choice* as Stingo. It makes me feel safer. If Stingo and *Sophie's Choice* are parodies, Mr. Styron and his publishers should be congratulated on their indomitable sense of humor, and I wish to be acclaimed for this momentous critical insight.

Another interpretation of Stingo's novel is possible. In the 19th century, art in Europe bifurcated; next to the opera, drama, novel, there began to flourish cheap (both artistically and financially) imitations—operetta, melodrama, farce, vaudeville, the dime novel. A copy of a novel in its first printing was expensive (at least in Russia), so it was sufficient for the writer to sell two thousand copies to live quite well. An installment of a penny dreadful, on the other hand, cost 1/100 of the price, and so no financial success was possible without mass sales.

In the United States (and possibly everywhere) today the price of a copy of any newly published novel has been reduced to the same figure, no matter whether the author is the greatest genius mankind ever produced or the lowest hack. By this, I do not mean that good prose does not appear in the West today. But it appears contrary to the current publishing economics, just as in post-1918 Russia it appears contrary to the totalitarian regime.

If Stingo's *Sophie's Choice* is a pulp novel, and this genre is now the accepted

"It is literature of the highest order."
—*Chicago Sun Times*

"A triumph on every level."
—*Newsday*

"It belongs on that small shelf reserved for American masterpieces."
—*Washington Post Book World*

"It has a look of permanence about it."
—*Newsweek*

"Eerily masterful . . ."
—*Chicago Tribune Book World*

"Magnificent . . ."
—*Women's Wear Daily*

*Lev Navrozov is a frequent contributor to the* Chronicles.



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norm for the New York literary and intellectual establishment, it is silly for me to condemn it. It is the same as going to an operetta and then announcing that the content is both trite and haphazard, the scenery gaudy, the costumes garish, the music atrocious, and the singers cannot sing. After all, this is what the audience paid for.

As is typical in a pulp novel, the plot of *Sophie's Choice* is so trite that an American reader of the '70s can predict it as a kind of catechism with all the answers known from television, magazines or previously published books.

Where did a young Southern writer (named Stingo) go to work, on his arrival in New York in the late '40s, and in what capacity? At a publishing house as a junior editor. What did he find there? Crass commercialism, ridiculous sterility, hopeless mediocrity. In *Sophie's Choice,* the abode of venal vulgarity was McGraw-Hill. How did this end? Stingo was fired, owing to his superior's conservative and reactionary views. Whom did he meet then? A Brooklyn Jew (named Nathan) and a Polish girl (named Sophie). What did they do? They loved each other with violent, noisy passion and quarreled just as violently and noisily. What was the Brooklyn Jew obsessed with? With the extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and with the lynching of a Negro in the South, the latter event being more inhuman, in his opinion, than the former. What happened to the Polish girl in Poland? Though a Gentile, and the daughter of a Polish Nazi sympathizer, she landed in a concentration camp, and her father was shot. So is the violent, noisy affair of the Brooklyn Jew and the Polish girl actually a symbol of Jewish-Christian love-hate? Of course: he hated her for having remained alive while six million Jews had died, while she felt guilty that she had tried to get out of the concentration camp by pretending to back her father's ferocious politics. What are some other traits of the Brooklyn Jew? He is full of "howlingly funny" jokes, "practically all of them Jewish," he takes drugs, and is oceanically sexy. ("Sex with Nathan in his amphetamine thrall was no mere fun—it was unharnessed, oceanic, otherworldly.") So is he another rehash of all the stereotypes of the Brooklyn Jew? Of course: for full measure, add also his being a paranoid schizo. How did all this end? He and the Polish girl commit suicide in a suicide pact.

True, some readers would not readily predict, at the beginning of the book, that the end will be a suicide pact. He could murder her, and then this would symbolize Jewish revenge. Or she could murder him, and then this would symbolize Christian anti-Semitism. Or they could murder each other, to symbolize both, plus the proximity of sex and murder, so natural in all hackneyed literature.

I once heard an American lady commenting on a couple she knew: "They always quarrel: something Dostoevskyish." Like many other New York writers and intellectuals, Stingo evidently believes that the noisier and more violent is the stereotyped melodrama about lovers who drink, take drugs, yell, fight, murder or commit suicide, the more Dostoevskyish the author.

Still, sufficiently astute readers can easily predict that the violent end of a melodrama will not be murder, but a suicide pact. Only such a violent ending would symbolize the ultimate Christian-Jewish love: despite the drugs and a schizophrenic Jew's vicious beatings, and his attempts to torture her, the Christian girl offers her life to the altar of suicide, and thus atones for her unseemly survival in a Nazi concentration camp. Since Stingo (and Mr. Styron) is a Christian, this is the only ending which would be acceptable to quite a few of the Jewish critics, magazine editors and book distributors of New York. After all, even McGraw-Hill has to sell books doesn't it?

One may get the impression that since its content is so trite, Mr. Styron's novel must be well-constructed, coherent, technically competent. However, pulp novels are both trite *and* haphazard: everything seems to have been written many times before and yet everything comes on as something accidental, irrelevant or absurd.

Several pages of *Sophie's Choice* are suddenly devoted to a pathological rape of Sophie in New York. Why rape? Stingo heard the story of a disgusting rape. Or thought it up. Why not plug it in, as television producers say? Sophie has a dream: a "torrid affair" with the Devil in church before the crucifix. Why not plug it in? A "raw sex scene" is never amiss. And suddenly Stingo learns that a Maria Hunt he knew in the South committed suicide, a plugged-in story which enables Stingo to plug in another "raw sex scene" (as a dream Stingo had about Maria Hunt) and then write the following monologue that would make many amateur novelists blush:

> "Nonetheless, I had passionately but chastely adored her, adored her for such a simple-minded reason as that she was beautiful enough to wreck the heart, and now I discovered that she was dead. Maria Hunt was *dead."*

Or Stingo suddenly decides to plug in a sex story of the kind to be found in every textbook on sexual pathology. How does he do it? He meets a certain Jack Brown, and that Jack Brown has a sister-in-law, and that sister-in-law will give Stingo the chance to plug in that pathological sex story. So Stingo begins spouting platitudes about his "friend of youth," Jack Brown:

> "I adored Jack Brown. There are friends one makes at a youthful age in whom one simply rejoices, for whom one possesses a love and loyalty mysteriously lacking in the friendships made in afteryears . . ."

Needless to say, after several pages of this twaddle, Jack Brown disappears as suddenly as he materialized to intro-



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duce his perverse sister-in-law, who also disappears after the perverse sex story.

Stingo revels in stereotypes and platitudes. But those are functional stereotypes or platitudes; they can be plugged in or out at will, exchanged, recombined, thrown out, or replaced, with the recurrent hope that the book will be less unoriginal, if more far-fetched and phony.

The first 20th-century Western pulp novel I read had been published in England in the 1920s and entitled *The Undesirable Governess.* There was a difference between *The Undesirable Governess* and 19th-century European dime fiction. The latter usually displayed dukes and duchesses, and all the appurtenances of luxury. "Tears streaming down her pale face, the duchess was running to the pond." The pond was a ducal accessory, of course. *The Undesirable Governess* displayed "people of culture" as the modern equivalent of dukes and duchesses. Thus, instead of running to the ducal pond, the heroine read the *Upanishads,* the most cultured pastime for the English middle class of the '20s. The *Upanishads* had replaced the ducal pond. Just as the 19th century dime novel readers were to gasp at the luxury of ducal ponds, the new pulp novel readers were to marvel at the culture of "people of culture."

*Sophie's Choice* is duly chock-full of appurtenances of culture. Here is a list of the names Stingo and his friends incessantly drop: Aristophanes, Bach, Bonnard, Beethoven, Brahms, up to Wagner, Whitehead, Whitman, Thornton Wilder. The epigraphs are from Rilke and Malraux, with the German and French originals respectively, while the last page conjures up Edgar Allen Poe.

Not that the reader will find a single interesting remark about any of the above. He is not supposed to. He is just supposed to marvel at the culture of "people of culture."

Does this give *Sophie's Choice* the flavor of a series of educational television programs, a cultural show-off, a lecture on culture? Not exactly. The book is a sandwich with several layers. One is indeed "culture," and it is written in a "cultured" style, that is, as literary tyros write when they want to show how literary and cultured they are. This layer hardly contains a single word which would have been pronounced as insufficiently elegant in a moth-eaten Victorian drawing room. How else can one speak of Bach, friends of youth, ideal love, and other subjects of college essays for many generations? The descriptions of the Nazis and Nazi concentration camps is another layer, this time an educational one, and seems to be made from New York educational television programs on the subject.

The other layers are what is known in current publishing parlance as "raw sex," that is, sex as a *moujik* (a coarse, loutish peasant) would arduously describe it. It is written in a *moujik's* language without a trace of culture, education or civilized manners. Any *moujik* from a remote Russian or Chinese village could write this kind of layer, and would be hugely tickled by the fact that simple filth has a market in New York.

Mr. Styron's layers do not mix—they are like many books in one. All of them are commercially necessary. If the book consisted of only educational layers, who would buy it? But if it consisted of exclusively *moujik* layers, the potential buyers would say: "This kind of stuff we can hear for free in locker rooms, or buy as pure hard porn—much cheaper per pound of obscenity." The readers must consume porn yet feel uplifted by "literary" and "cultural" references to Bach, ideal love, Edgar Allan Poe and the evil of Nazism.

When Stingo writes his *moujik* layer, he is like a drunken *moujik,* sharing his sex experiences with other drunken *moujiks.* But the moment he changes


In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

**The Haves, Have-nots & Have-littles**

"Many neoconservatives, in clinging to unrealistic political alliances, have come to resemble wayward missionaries who swill with drunkards in order to reform them."
from *"La Ronde,* or the Dance of Labels"
by Paul Gottfried

Also:
Opinions & Views—Commendables—In Focus
Waste of Money—The American Proscenium
Stage—Screen—Music—Liberal Culture
Journalism—Polemics & Exchanges





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over into a cultural or educational layer, he forgets what he wrote on the previous page and becomes a fastidious esthete, *New Yorker* style.

A Nazi says to Sophie, for example: *"Ich möchte mit Dir schlafen."* This means, explains Stingo, "I'd like to get you into bed with me." "Dreary loutish words," fumes Stingo, forgetting that for the *other* layers of his novel, these would be the most refined, or decent, words imaginable. An "utterance one might expect from a B-grade movie Nazi *Schweinehund,"* rages Stingo in a fit of culture. The Nazi was drunk, "which might help explain such coarseness." We thus fathom the depths of degradation to which Nazism has sunk.

Half a page of cultural layer is devoted to a still more incredible lack of culture among the Nazis: the commandant of Auschwitz loves—no, not Bach or Purcell, as one should, but the Franz Lehár operettas. (A 19th-century pulp writer would have written that the commandant did not wear gloves when he went out for a stroll.)

Indeed, even the *moujik* layers Stingo grinds out are suffused with a cultural message and an educational mission. Mankind (including Bach, Rilke, Edgar Allan Poe and all the others on Stingo's cultural register) was the "victim of two thousand years" of "Judeo-Christian conditioning." Thus, Stingo liberates mankind by a *moujik's* description of a *moujik's* sex (which Bach, Rilke, Edgar Allan Poe and the others failed to discover). This duly reminds us of those American girls who wear phony patches on their artificially faded threadbare dresses and think they have discovered poverty. What Stingo seems not to notice is that most of mankind wears real patches and lives in real poverty.

He tends to overlook that most of mankind lives in unavoidable sexual boorishness, that is, the unavoidable denial of privacy and decency. Naturally, it is women who suffer more than men from this lack of "Judeo-Christian conditioning," for a verbal sexual free-for-all quickly turns into a physical sexual free-for-all in which the stronger, the men, gain the rapist's advantages, especially if acting in gangs.

It is the spate of books like *Sophie's Choice* that provides Soviet propaganda with perhaps the best weapon of persuasion. "Do you now understand what freedom is?" I can see in *Literaturnya Gazieta.* "Freedom is where millions of Stingos flood life with their *moujik's* squalidness."

In Moscow we were told at school that our country was not even shown on the maps of the imperialist West, except as a white spot: for the capitalists, we do not exist. *Sophie's Choice* seems not only to corroborate this agitprop wisdom, but goes further. The historical experiences of Asia, Africa or both Americas—prior to the advent of Europeans—are annihilated by Mr. Styron's version of history. According to Stingo, the "concentration camp universe" is the "institution of chattel slavery as it was practiced by the great nations of the West." The Nazis "were the first slaveholders to fully abrogate any lingering humane sentiments regarding the essence of life itself." No such slaveholders anywhere before 1933? Well, "in the West Indies in the mid-1700s the European masters for a time felt no compunction about working slaves to death." Thus, chattel slavery existed before 1933 outside the West, but only when practiced by Europeans.

In the early '30s *Pravda* reprinted the Reichstag speeches of German communist leaders who meticulously explained whom they would exterminate wholesale ("as a class") once they came to power (with Soviet aid, of course). At the same time, the Nazis showed the Germans Soviet newsreels about Russian farmers who were roped in on a mass scale. Germans who were afraid to be exterminated voted for Hitler because this seemed to them the best protection against extermination. They were little sorry that Hitler promised to exterminate Jews.

According to *Sophie's Choice,* all this is rather unreal: no trace of the Soviet regime or the German communists can be detected in its image of the real world. The Western evil called Nazism descends *deus ex machina,* so to speak; it is a phenomenon unrelated to anything, except the Europeans in the West Indies in the mid-1700s.

But have there been any concentration camps outside the West since 1945, when Nazi Germany was dissolved? There is on page 11A of the *New York Times,* August 20th, 1979, a tiny 16-line item, noting, in the form of a background remark, that the new communist rulers of Cambodia had announced that the previous communist rulers had killed "more than three million people," and since the total population was less than eight million, this means that two members of almost every average family of four were killed. Has this any relevance for Stingo? Not very much. The only danger to mankind as of 1979 is Nazi Germany, plus the Southern lynchers of 40 years ago. Otherwise, evil in history and over the globe is a vast white spot.

But some people know also that Stalin planned concentration camps for Soviet Jews in 1954, and instructed high NKVD officials how to dump entire transports off railroad cars into a Siberian lake. In 1973, Brezhnev called for the Arabs to destroy Israel, which would have meant the wholesale extermination of its population. For Stingo things are simple: the only danger to Jews as of 1979 is Nazi Germany, though the Southern lynchers of 40 years ago should not be underestimated.

But if Stingo's conceptualization of the "concentration camp universe" is a fanatic's poster, perhaps he conveys some subtle knowledge of the Germans and Poles he describes which no German or Polish witness or participant has conveyed before in the libraries of memoirs written in the last 30-odd years on the subject.

In Stingo's description, the commandant of Auschwitz, Höss, speaks to a more cultured Nazi about a split in the



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party and cannot recall the word "schizophrenia." The more cultured Nazi prompts him: "Schizophrenia."

> " 'Yes, that's the word,' Höss replied. 'That mind doctor in Vienna, his name escapes—'
>
> 'Sigmund Freud.' "

Actually, this cute conversation could take place between, say, two New Yorkers. Freud contended that his psychoanalysis should be applied only to mild neuroses—never to schizophrenia. A group of Americans calling themselves psychiatrists is the only large medical group on earth which began to use Freud's psychoanalysis for the medical treatment of schizophrenia—despite Freud's protests. Schizophrenia was first described by Kraepelin and the term was coined by Bleuler. Even the American pro-Freudian *Encyclopedia Britannica* says in its rave article on Freud that he was not "primarily interested in this psychosis." Demonstrating the ignorance of the Nazis, Stingo spreads around his smug provincialism of the '70s. He fares even worse in the scenes of Polish resistance. To anyone with even a precarious contact with any antitotalitarian conspiracy, his insights into the opaque world of clandestine political action (unless a safe, well-publicized and rewarding mass conformity in New York, like the "anti-Vietnam War movement" can be called resistance) sound, to say the least, bizarre. This is how a Polish resister tries to recruit Sophie (Zosia in Polish):

> "I am appealing to you in the *name of humanity.* I am trying to appeal to your sense of decency, to a sense of yourself as a *human being* and a *Pole.*" [The italics belong to Stingo.]

Surely, even a New York environmental activist does not declaim like that as he tries to persuade his pal to take part in a protest march. Or does Stingo believe that in order to persuade someone to face torture, it is necessary to say:

> "You must reconsider, Zosia. This is becoming *indecent* of you. Consider what you can do for all of us. Consider your country! Consider Poland!"

Curiously enough, though *Sophie's Choice* perfectly fits Soviet propaganda, a Moscow editor would insist that Stingo delete such speeches as too primitive, stilted and slogan-riddled. "People do not speak like that under the circumstances, Mr. Styron," he would say. Mr. Styron, a recipient of the Prix de Rome of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and a Pulitzer Prize winner, would have had a better chance with his MS somewhere in Albania or perhaps Trinidad. Unless his novel were uprightly presented as a parody, as, at the beginning, we have suggested it should have been. □

# Lord Snow on Art & Life

**C. P. Snow: *The Realists;* Charles Scribner's Sons; New York.**

**by Dain A. Trafton**

It is disappointing not to be able to recommend C. P. Snow's *The Realists:* the author's name and preface promise a better book; the subject deserves one. The "realists" to whom the title refers are eight of the greatest novelists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—Stendhal, Balzac, Dickens, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Galdós, Henry James and Proust. According to the preface, those masters have much to teach us about both art and life. Their understanding that the "primal impulse" to tell a good story lies at the heart of good novel writing reproves the modern tendency to disregard plot and "to compose novels as verbal puzzles to be worked out by persons cleverer than the original writers." Even more important, through the realists' subtle renderings of character and society, they enhance our self-knowledge and our sensitivity to the world around us. Their art instructs. So do their lives. And the preface offers to show us that "a writer's life is not just connected with his work; it cannot be separated from it." As a distinguished novelist himself, with an unusually varied experience in science, letters and public life, Lord Snow might seem ideally qualified to develop these themes. If he had done so in the literate but popular manner that is his forte, he would have written a book of real value. He would have made a contribution to public taste by directing readers of novels back to the great works that establish the standards for the art. To read Cheever, Pynchon, Bellow, or Updike with *The Red and the Black, Great Expectations, The Brothers Karamazov* or *War and Peace* in mind provides a salutary perspective. The best of what is being done today is interesting but not great. Lord Snow might have illuminated this fact and stimulated reflection upon its causes. Unfortunately, *The Realists* falls far beneath its possibilities. What might have been a useful book turned out superficial, muddled, and at times downright silly.

The body of the book consists of eight essays, one on each writer. They are loose, chatty mixtures of fact, speculation and opinion. Occasionally they interest and amuse, but the level of information and understanding rarely rises above what one would expect in a good encyclopedia. The themes announced in the preface function only intermittently in the essays themselves, and as a result the notion that we can learn something of importance from these writers soon dissipates in a welter of random observations: Stendhal did well

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at school; he liked mathematics; he lacked ambition in the civil service; he had a thick neck, and his legs were "not long enough"; he suffered from unrequited love; he was devoted to his mother; he was "far from impotent"; and so on, and so on. Perhaps such details might be shown to possess a significance beyond themselves; Lord Snow seems to love them aimlessly, for their own sake. They lead him to no insight into Stendhal's character, nor do they help us to understand his work. Indeed, Lord Snow's discussion of Stendhal's masterpieces makes no effort to relate them seriously to his life. We are told, for example, that Julien Sorel—the hero of *The Red and the Black*—is "the first voice of ultimate class hatred in a major work of literature," and that "Stendhal identified himself with Julien." However, nothing in the account of Stendhal's life prepares us to see him as an apostle of class hatred. On the contrary, Lord Snow asserts that the author of *The Charterhouse of Parma* "would have liked to be an Italian aristocrat." Possibly class hatred and the desire to be an Italian aristocrat can be made compatible, but one would like to be shown how. In fact, Lord Snow's view of the role of class in *The Red and the Black* is unconvincing—and left wholly unsubstantiated. Class hatred cannot explain Julien's ultimate motivation, and in any case he does not enjoy the uncritical sympathy of his creator. Given Lord Snow's interpretation, however, one must raise a question. Why has he chosen to praise the "realism" of a novel that he believes to be inspired by class hatred? What lesson are we to derive from this?

Similar examples of superficiality and incoherence occur plentifully in every chapter, but nowhere is the book's failure more evident than in the chapters on Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. As figures of the very highest authority in world literature, they stand out even among the other great "realists," and the remarkable features of their lives—Dostoevsky's youthful career as a revolutionary, his compulsive gambling, his emergence as a spokesman for conservatism; Tolstoy's transformation from dissolute young aristocrat into prophet of moral reform—make them especially suited to an analysis that blends biography with literary criticism. Furthermore, both require special interpretation because they challenge so radically the values that prevail in Europe and America today. Both rejected utterly the scientific, commercial, democratic and "progressive" culture of liberal Europe. To both, the liberalism that grew out of the Enlightenment seemed antagonistic to religion and a healthy political and social order; and while the details of their programs differ, both men sought to restore an essentially Christian polity. In this, they shocked nineteenth-century intellectuals much as another great Russian novelist—Solzhenitsyn—shocks our own. Lord Snow simply declines the task of trying to come to grips with the "realism" and the importance for our time of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. He contents himself with a few facts and platitudes, spiced with a great deal of gossip about the sex lives of the great men. The facts, although sparse, seem to be accurate; the gossip is mostly silly; but the platitudes can mislead. For example, in discussing the Grand Inquisitor section of *The Brothers Karamazov,* Lord Snow uncritically adopts the existentialist-leftist tradition that stresses Ivan Karamazov's hatred of God, and ignores the religious affirmation that derives from Dostoevsky's overall design. A distortion of this kind, or the distortion of *The Red and the Black* mentioned earlier, coupled with the general triviality of approach throughout, makes one wonder about Lord Snow's preparation, or motives. Did he fail to study his material with sufficient care? Is he unaware of what other critics have done? Or is he engaged in an effort to make what he has to say conform to the taste of his audience? Is he more concerned with mimicking the thoughts that his readers already accept than with trying to lead them to conceptions that are different, older and more difficult? In any case, *The Realists* has nothing important to teach about either art or life. □

"Among all these excellent pieces, none are finer than his rich examinations of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy."

—*Wall Street Journal*

# Private Part as Thing

**Kingsley Amis: *Jake's Thing;* Viking Press; New York.**

by Joseph Schwartz

Kingsley Amis's first and best novel, *Lucky Jim,* established expectations for his subsequent work that were not fulfilled. This new novel is being misread in some quarters, ironically enough, because it comes closer to realizing what *Lucky Jim* promised than any of the eleven novels since then. I will try to look at *Jake's Thing* without allowing the happy memory of Jim's antics to cast a troublesome shadow over my evaluation. It is enough to say by way of comparison that Jake is not Jim grown older, and that 25 years later Amis is much less lighthearted.

Oxford don Jaques (Jake) Richardson, nearly 60, has worked out a tolerable, mundane pattern of life with Brenda, his third wife. But this circumscribed enclave is threatened by his disturbing

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lack of interest in sex, an interest previously central to his life. Comfort and pleasure are the twin rulers of his world. There surely must be, he concludes, something very seriously wrong with a man whose appetite is not markedly, constantly, and earnestly stimulated by the sexual banquet promised by his culture through television, radio, magazines, books, advertising, film, and almost everything else. Referred to a specialist, Dr. Proinsias Rosenberg, he docilely undergoes the treatment offered by professional sexologists for such a tragic condition. The ludicrous "profession" of sex therapy is Amis's immediate target but not his principle one. Rosenberg's diagnosis contains every silly cliché we have come, alas, to accept as absolute truth. "Our society's repressive attitude toward sex has engendered an unrelaxed attitude in you. You've been conditioned into acceptance of a number of rigid taboos . . . You're suffering from guilt and shame."

Jake is suspicious of the diagnosis, since his experience suggests that he lives in a society in which anything goes, a society, in fact, which insists that he take up the sex game with the enthusiastic intensity of everyone else. He concludes later, "Repressive? In 1977? I was doing fine when things were really repressive, if they ever were, it's only since they've become, oh, permissive that I've had trouble." For now, he dutifully goes along with the prescribed treatment; he is in the habit of doing exactly what the doctor orders.

Although one is not surprised by the illiteracy of specialists nowadays, Rosenberg is astonishingly remarkable in his indifference and antipathy to everything but his narrow profession. He prescribes a methodical, joyless program of nongenital and genital sensate focusing therapy in rigidly controlled stages. Jake is bored. Dr. Rowena Trefusis offers the technological approach to sex —high speed artificial stimulators and Richterlike measuring apparatus. "Nobody's thinking of you as an individual or a person. You're just an object." Jake registers a disappointing .9 on a 33.9 scale. The girlie magazines and other fantasy masturbatory techniques also leave his libido unrehabilitated. Jake thinks the girls have faces like Jimmy Carter. Finally, he is sent to Ed, the American "facilitator," for group therapy. "I aim to release checks on emotion and improve insight." Ed's abuse therapy and humiliation techniques, while driving one patient to a suicide attempt, convince Jake that the game is not worth the candle. All the sexologists have to offer, he concludes, is arrogance, effrontery, and greed; intellectually they are beneath contempt.

Brenda, however, finds another man in the process and leaves Jake. Settling in "a perfectly bearable couple of rooms," Jake never wonders if or for long how much he misses her. Learning that his problem is physical after all (testosterone level), he declines the simple cure.

> "Jake did a quick run-through of women in his mind, not of the ones he had known or dealt with in the past few months or years so much as all of them: their concern with the surface of things, with objects and appearances, with their surroundings and how they looked and sounded in them, with seeming to be better and to be right while getting everything wrong, their automatic assumption of the role of the injured party in any clash of wills, their certainty that a view is the more credible and useful for the fact that they hold it, their use of misunderstanding and misrepresentation as weapons of debate, their selective sensitivity to tones of voice, their unawareness of the difference in themselves between sincerity and insincerity, their interest in importance (together with noticeable inability to discriminate in that sphere), their fondness for general conversation and directionless discussion, their preemption of the major share of feeling, their exaggerated estimate of their own plausibility, their never listening and lots of other things like that, all according to him.
>
> So it was quite easy. 'No thanks,' he said."

Jake's decision is not a victory, even a limited one. Although he is rightly critical of and indignant over the cultural malaise of which he is a part, his withdrawal into cold indifference, while necessary, is hardly triumphant. There is a submerged scenario in the novel pointing to things more significant than the desperately funny satire on sexology, which is, after all, merely a symptom of society's sexual madness. It is necessary to look at Jake from another perspective. The passage quoted above, for all its insight, contains the key words, "all according to him."

The women in Jake's life make a common accusation against him. Brenda "considered her husband to be at best indifferent to all women except as sex-

"The title of the new Amis novel is a pun on the hero's anachronistic male chauvinism and his member, which is almost as moribund as Lord Chatterley's."

—*Booklist*

". . . there are problems—among them a growing meanness toward the young, a taunting Tory narrowness . . ."

—Benjamin DeMott
*Atlantic Monthly*

"It must be said that *Jake's Thing* is a very funny book . . ."

—*New York Review of Books*



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ual pabulum." She tells him bluntly that "You've got to find out whether you feel any affection for me or whether you're the sort of man who can only feel affection for women he wants to go to bed with . . . " Eve, a one-time convenient bed-partner, agrees with Brenda: Jake is a man who sees nothing more in women than creatures to go to bed with. The two women, he admits, are "absolutely right." It becomes clear that Jake's "thing" is not merely his penis; his "thing" is a fundamental dislike of women as whole beings—misogyny.

In the central confessional scene of the novel Jake discusses this problem with a fellow don. (The play on *Don* Juan runs throughout the book.) He discovers that he has been looking at women through spectacles of some kind, getting a distorted image. He had thought that women were tolerated because men didn't see them as they really were and "only-wanted-one-thing" from them. Not wanting that any longer, Jake concludes that he doesn't much like them in any way and despises them intellectually. "Imagine me thinking I liked them all those years when I didn't really care for them one bit." Although he no longer has on the distorting spectacles, his sight is not corrected. Having seen women in only one way, as sexual objects, he cannot now see them in any other. Ironically enough, it is his homosexual colleague who tries to put him right. Men, too, he explains, have their own ways of being evasive, dull, overbearing, and unsatisfactory. Although Jake can say to his colleague that women "are nice, aren't they," it remains a question, and, even if answered affirmatively, has no effect on his permanently warped psyche. "Do you know what I think I am, Damon? A male chauvinist pig." Going back to his Oxford rooms, he takes a plastic phallus sent him by women petitioning for admission to his college and destroys it with a paperknife, a razor blade, and his bare hands. Attacking his own masculinity in an act of sexual self-destruction he concludes that "life is a sight easier this way if you run things right." It is one of the most brilliantly managed episodes in the novel.

Society's deification of sex has been the effective cause of his distorted vision; he pays a higher price for this deplorable state of affairs than any of the women he has used as objects, having become an object himself. Jake's plight does not lessen the accuracy or essential rightness of his angry perspective in commenting on the religion (it is) of sex, finding it offensive and nonsensical. His virtues are good old-fashioned common sense, not suffering fools gladly, and positive anger at human stupidity. These are, of course, all well and good; yet they never stand up under the assault of experience unless they reflect a transcendental system of values. Jake has no such system. He is already a lost soul when we first meet him, the dramatic action of the novel portraying only the end result of his pathetically unmanaged and thoughtless life.

In the thirties Rosalind Murray wrote a profound book, *The Good Pagan's Failure;* I still recommend it to anyone who will listen. Her thesis applies to Jake, an indifferent, if not good, pagan. Murray tactfully questioned the moral authority of those who strove to live decent lives in a decent society without having any spiritual basis upon which their decent instincts rested. Forty years later Jake is a vivid sample of the consequences of the good pagan's failure. The society that evolved from their noble efforts is what we see and experience daily: sexual madness, moral indifference, meaningless anguish, obscene language, malicious vandalism, the corruption of political philosophy, and the decline of religion. The absence of a moral or religious sensibility in Jake is the key to his character and the explanation for his cold, selfish indifference.

> "Jake's religious history was simple and compact. His parents had been Anglicans and right up to the present day the church he didn't go to had remained Anglican. As far as he could remember he had never had any belief, as opposed to inert acquiescence, in the notion of immortality, and the whole game of soldiers had been settled for him forty-five years previously, when he had come across and instantly and fully taken in the Socratic pronouncement that if death was unconsciousness it was not to be feared. Next question. It, the next question, did bother him: how to see to it that the period between now and then should be as comfortable and enjoyable as could realistically be expected."

Even after he makes the discovery that he has missed the whole point of the dangerous, essential, and joyous difference between men and women, he is unable to do anything about it because, permanently crippled, he has nothing upon which to reconstruct his life. His misogyny is evidence for how much he has been cheated, and has cheated himself, by accepting sex as the compelling image of reality. No one wins. Loser takes all. "Oh, bugger and bugger" is the peevish lament of a diminished man.

The careful reader will notice a suggestion Amis offers as integral to any explanation for Jake's—and our—plight. What society is and what it offers is packaged in an appalling language that corrupts the mind, cripples the emotions, and deforms the imagination. I believe that it was St. Augustine who held that the corruption of society follows upon the corruption of language. Jake is surprised that the otherwise obtuse Dr. Rosenberg agrees with him that what people read and see affects their actions. "If it didn't, my work would have to take a very different form." Language is never neutral, but always tendentious. For good or ill, language works. Virtue is the only defense against bad rhetoric. But where is this understanding of the sovereignty of the good (Iris Murdoch's phrase) to come from for someone like Jake?



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" 'Darling, you are a silly old Oxford don, it is only a word.'

*'Only a word?*—sorry. No, this whole thing is all about language.' "

In this terrible quagmire of abused and bloodied language, there seems to be no way out. Jake has no "strong barriers of moral conviction [that] can be raised against mischief." Like Alice, he is trapped by the magisterial tyranny of our Humpty Dumpty world wearing its most contemptuous smile.

" 'But *glory* doesn't mean *A nice knockdown argument,* 'Alice objected.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.' "

Kingsley Amis has written a bright and clever satire on the sexual habits and hang-ups of our troubled society. That is no longer easy to do, since the subject has already been parodied by the grotesque behavior of people who are supposed to be real. Reaching a good deal deeper, he has touched on the underlying case of society's moral insolvency. He has done this using a cast of inherently uninteresting characters, while managing to persuade us to pretend otherwise for the fun (and terror) of watching them work out destinies we hope to avoid. Only one problem, not a small one, remains. Having given Jake the dominant point of view, Amis is stuck with the ambivalence toward women which results. A point of view more comprehensive than Jake's is not apparent often enough to the reader, causing him to confuse Amis and Jake. I would have preferred firmer auctorial control, especially for such a delicate instrument as satire.

A final irony too delicious to omit: *Jake's Thing* was selected for its membership by the Playboy Book Club. □

# Deciding What's Bias

**Herbert J. Gans: *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News,* Newsweek *and* Time; Pantheon Books; New York.**

**by James Hitchcock**

Imagine getting an ample grant to study the news media and being given fairly open access to the news staffs of the major networks and magazines. A leading publisher then produces a thick presentation of your findings. The thought of the possibilities in such a windfall makes the mouth water.

It must be reported that exactly this good fortune fell to the sociologist Herbert Gans. How did he celebrate his good fortune? He has served up so many fat, slow pitches that apologists for the media will have no trouble hitting them anywhere they want. What started out as a promise of a trenchant, fair-minded critique ends up mainly as mild praise. If Gans can be said to have a thesis, it is that the media are not liberal enough in their politics and are too respectful of conventional moral beliefs. Don't rub your eyes; you read that correctly. While you might think that liberal bias permeates the media, Gans can't seem to find it. It can be predicted with certitude that media apologists will point to his book the next time they are accused of such bias: "If we are getting criticized from both sides, we must be doing things right."

As a sociologist Gans should at least be praised for avoiding technical jargon. For a work of sociology this is mostly readable. In addition, sections of the book are mildly interesting, such as his discussion of the bureaucratic processes by which news stories are chosen and refined, which somehow makes us suspect that the book is not totally without redeeming social value. As to its central concern with the mental assumptions which govern news coverage, however, it is useful mainly for what it tells us about Herbert Gans. The light it sheds on the ideology of the news industry is minimal.

One of Gans' favorite theses is that reporters and editors are innocent of ideology, and like to think they don't have any. Gans identifies himself as a "left-liberal" and seems to think that by doing so he absolves himself of the same criticism. But ideological bias distorts his entire coverage, and it is not always clear how conscious it is. Astoundingly, for example, Gans mentions the Black Panthers at least four times and in one place uses them as an example of radical groups treated unfairly in the media. Yet, although he cites some of the work of Edward Jay Epstein, he nowhere even mentions Epstein's famous article in which he showed how the media kept repeating the charge that the Panthers were being systematically wiped out by the police even though the charge was, on examination, clearly false.

Similarly, there are at least five references to the Tet offensive during the Vietnam War, and in a footnote there

"Gans has succeeded, and the rest of us—journalists as well as our readers and viewers—are in his debt."
—*Commonweal*

"An excellent purchase for both public and academic libraries."
—*Library Journal*

*James Hitchcock is Professor of History at St. Louis University. His most recent book is* Catholicism and Modernity: Confrontation or Capitulation?



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is a reference to Peter Braestrup's massive book, *Big Story,* which argued in effect that the media turned a Viet Cong defeat into a victory. Gans simply repeats the old clichés about the editors in New York being unwilling to believe the bad news being reported from the field. He does not refute Braestrup's contentions; he simply pretends that they had never been made. He is apparently a species of anti-anticommunist who takes a position of lofty superiority to the supposed hysterics of the Cold Warriors. He notes with distaste, for example, that reports on "socialist countries" like Russia and China tend to focus on the absence of civil liberties rather than on the society's economic successes, as though one effectively compensated for the other. (In fact, China in the 1970s received almost adulatory treatment in the Western media until after Mao's death.) Economic successes? As if the bread Russians eat these days were not from Kansas.

If pressed, Gans would probably admit that the Western press is free in ways the communist press is not. But you could not infer that fact from the following remarks: ". . . communist journalists lack what American professionals *define* as autonomy." "News from communist sources has . . . always been *attributed* with the qualification that it could be a lie, or at least 'propaganda.' " [Emphasis added.] In another place Gans implies that communist journalists respond to pressure in the same way that Westerners do.

The root of his problem is with ideological definitions, odd for a social scientist who criticizes the media for being insufficiently self-conscious. He is fond of the term "ultraconservative," for example, but it is nowhere defined and seems to include anyone to the right of, say, Jacob Javits. On the other side, however, Jerry Brown, that patron of Jane Fonda, is defined as "right-leaning." It is a simple and familiar strategy—by defining as extremists almost everyone to the right of himself, Gans seeks to establish his own position as a truly moderate and centrist one. When noting the media's biases, he usually says that they exclude "extremists" on both sides. But the extreme left is composed of people who want to destroy the existing political and economic systems, by force if necessary, so the equivalent on the right would have to be groups like the Minutemen and the Ku Klux Klan. For Gans, however, the Weathermen are roughly the equivalent of Ronald Reagan. Duly elected public officials somehow end up lumped with terrorists.

Reading the book carefully, one finds inescapable confirmation of the media's bias, even though this is not what Gans intends. One survey of prominent journalists found 52 percent describing themselves as left or a little to the left, while only 17 percent would call themselves rightists. Over 40 percent were Democrats, only 16 percent Republicans. Faced with obvious instances of liberal media bias, Gans has to do some fancy juggling to ignore the obvious. One editor told him "I wouldn't hire a Goldwaterite." A few lines later Gans says ". . . ultraconservatives (and socialists) would consume precious time and energy only because their political values diverge from the enduring ones." But the editor did not tell Gans that he would not hire a socialist. That is Gans' interpolation to avoid having to discuss a blatant instance of liberal prejudice. He cannot see the point even when it stares him in the face. He reports, for example, that news institutions sometimes keep "house" conservatives or radicals on the premises. But in one instance a "house conservative" turned out to hold liberal positions on many questions. In other words, what the journalists perceived as "conservatism" was not that at all, although Gans does not grasp the point. Despite Edith Efron's carefully documented charges of television bias in favor of Senator McGovern against President Nixon in 1972, Gans does not discuss the substance of the charge, merely treating it as an example of outside pressure brought to bear on the media. He is nowhere more confused than on the question of who should determine news policy. Towards the end of the book he suggests tentatively that news agencies might be controlled, democratically, by working journalists, which might, he admits, give the news an even greater leftward slant. (He regrets that, unlike in Europe, American journalists rarely side openly with the left.)

How much should the news respond to outside pressures? Here Gans has a neat, if unstated, formula: outside criticism from the right is bad and should be resisted. Outside pressure from the left represents the legitimate aspirations of deprived groups and should be listened to.

One of his more interesting revelations is that letters of protest from conservatives are discounted in advance and have no weight. On the other hand, Gans is critical of the media for its "slowness" in responding to the demands of women, blacks, and other "oppressed" groups. Why should the media prove responsive, albeit slowly, to some groups and not others? If you are looking for an answer, you won't find it in Gans' book.

Gans is mainly interested in political questions, and one of the most glaring flaws in the book is its failure to discuss the role of the media in effecting the "cultural revolution" of the past fifteen years. Inexplicably, he tells us that the media is respectful of tradition (although it also favors the new) and treats popular taboos with respect, which suggests that he has been getting different editions of the news from most of the rest of us. Benjamin Stein, in his book *The View from Sunset Boulevard,* has shown how small towns are often portrayed as sinister in television entertainment programs, yet Gans would have us believe the media are prejudiced in their favor. In fact, he seems to resent any favorable treatment given those outside what he describes as the "sophisticated" Eastern liberal axis. Charles



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Kuralt's *On the Road* program is contemptuously dismissed as merely concerned with "harmless eccentrics," who give the false impression that rugged individualism is still possible in America. Gans echoes the resentment of local journalists that the networks gave favorable coverage to the Iowa Amish trying to prevent their children from being herded into public schools. In case you hadn't noticed, Gans reports that the media are biased against New York City! (As an instance of journalistic timidity Gans cites the reluctance of one magazine to do a cover story of Tiny Tim, the now-forgotten camp pop singer of a few years ago.)

On rare occasions, Gans seems to be getting a hazy glimpse of the real situation, as in the following: "Lacking contacts with working-class sources, for example, the journalists' conception of them was influenced by the hard-hats who made news during the Vietnam War, and by Archie Bunker, a fictional working-class character developed by upper-middle-class professionals in Hollywood." One wants to say here: "Good, Herbert! You are beginning to get it. Keep going, Herbert." But, alas! Herbert drops the ball. Such brief insights, if pursued, would require a wholesale rethinking of Gans' entire understanding of the media. A few pages later he drops, without comment, the astounding information that magazine editors sometimes deliberately set out to offend their more traditional-minded readers, in the hope that they will cancel their subscriptions and thus leave behind a properly "advanced" kind of audience.

Reading the book, I kept thinking about the most outrageous recent example of media bias—the Jonestown horror—and what light Gans could shed on such incredible distortion of the truth. Until the facts were finally undeniable, the media either treated the People's Temple as a benign institution or as a crazy religious sect, instead of as the murderous, Marxist microcosm that it was. In Gans' system such a thing could not have happened, because the media are supposedly hostile to political radicalism and overly respectful of religion.

Who will watch the watchers? Not, I'm afraid, Herbert Gans. □

# Truths and Images

**Juliana Geran Pilon: *Notes from the Other Side of Night;* Regnery/Gateway; South Bend, Indiana.**

**by Becki Klute**

Fragility, a sad thoughtfulness, a certain wariness are one's immediate impressions of the jacket photo of the author. She seems very young to be a professor of philosophy, or to have fashioned such a document. The Romanian, totalitarian, reality was the only one she knew until her family finally secured permission to emigrate in the early '60s. In 1975, it was with an adult's perspective, and an understanding of a different, Western, reality that she parted the Iron Curtain to visit her homeland once more—and she's willing to share the emotions, memories, pain which that visit evoked. She writes:

> ". . . my diary was written not only from a need not to forget but also as a kind of warning; for those who have never left their homeland, for those who have never shed innocence, for those who cannot imagine the loss of freedom, this book is a reminder that there is another side of night."

Sharply juxtaposed against 1975 Romania are her childhood reminiscences: like any traveler, she finds things the same and different simultaneously. She finds friends still at the same address of 14 years before; "the parents could thereby avoid having to accommodate total strangers who would move in, under state authority, to take the space of the child who had moved out, while the young ones would be spared the anxiety of being assigned to live in another city . . ." Certainly the state would not allow just two people to occupy space enough for three. The state is so concerned for its citizens that it pays close attention to such detail.

But *Notes* isn't about the state, not really. It isn't even about communism. It's about people and the banal evils with which they dwell, thanks to something called communism. To an "innocent American," Juliana Pilon's book has somewhat the same taste as a Sweetart: her narrative is gently lyrical, sometimes sad, sometimes amusing, always moving. But the biting reality of everyday life behind the Iron Curtain is very tart among sentiments, rather like a cold slap in the face. Her very style mirrors such contrast; fond, even sentimental reminiscences cushion, but do not mask her incisive condemnation of evil.

Solzhenitsyn and others, of course have chronicled such horrors. But seldom has anyone done it in her idiosyncratic fashion. From the customs agent who cannot smile, to a flower vendor, to a taxi driver, to old family friends, the people of Bucharest show such life as they can wrest from a system that is designed to stifle human existences. For signs of life must be carefully hidden in Romania. One doesn't express anger when one must stand in line for an hour to buy a loaf of bread. Joy is manifested only at state-approved times and occasions. And one never, never voices doubts, but merely parrots the proper slogans. The smell of oppression and outrage pervades everything. It is assumed that an informer or agent is usually nearby, so one is always careful of even "private" statements. The long arm of the state reaches even here, where Mrs. Pilon must ". . . refrain

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from recording anything that the Secret Police might be able to trace to a specific person." But how can it be? Doesn't the Soviet-bloc reflect the dictatorship of the proletariat? Isn't it a socialist utopia? We were taught that the only problems in communist countries consisted of minor material shortages caused by subversive elements. How can we understand a world turned upside-down, where visiting grandmas must register at a city office, where the mother of preschool children must have an official permit to work at home, where production quotas mean maximum rather than minimum?

It sounds like Orwell's *1984,* or a cheap paperback—unreal, unbelievable. The state invades human lives. It's as simple as that. The state decides that girls must wear white headbands; the state decides who goes to high school or college (good grades and intelligence do not necessarily qualify); the state decides where one works and where one sleeps and with whom one shares a bathroom.

With such constraints, life turns inward. Flickers of humanness somehow survive even the most banal evil. Those of "unhealthy social origin" cannot celebrate the feast of the Passover—but they do. If its meaning must be concealed even from one's own children, still it is observed. Small scraps of happiness are carefully saved and sewn into a patchwork of memories—a new doll, a ride on a brand-new bicycle, ice cream from grandfather, a trip to the mountains. Sometimes a trace of bitterness creeps in like a stain; one must be careful lest it spread and spoil the whole fabric.

Such calm acceptance of inevitability, the conscious rejection of bitterness, calls to mind Anne Frank. The sensitivity with which a young Jewish girl, fleeing the holocaust, wrote of her violated existence, finds its reflection in another young Jewish girl in the next generation. Anne Frank had to cope with open, officially sanctioned annihilation. Juliana Pilon struggled to survive the monstrous deceptions and distortions of reality, presented as truth, that totalitarianism enthrones, indeed, depends on for its very existence. What seemed merely incomprehensible to the child is seen by the adult as a virtual rape of truth. Orwellian doublethink is required to comprehend the fact of a "childlessness tax" which is so high that it prevents a couple from being able to save enough money to have a child. Faced with an all-pervading atmosphere of lies, some simply shelve rationality and become virtuosos of the accepted newspeak and doublethink. Others develop a means of maintaining a measure of personal and intellectual integrity, even sacrificing material benefits, merely giving lip service to the intruding bureaucracy. "Send us books," implore Dr. Pilon's friends. She looks at the shabby apartment and wonders—books? "Send us books about Mexico in the Middle Ages, about beads and porcelain, about ancient religions, about mountains, and ancient languages, maybe some novels too, and poetry." Anne Frank, too, mourned for all the things she did not, and would never, know. Such hunger, no, *need* for information seems almost desperate where the primary mental diet of men and women consists of "spoon-fed nonfacts," where children repeat slogans in lieu of facts, where one learns early how to reconcile what he can see with what he is told—and after a while ceases to be surprised at the contradictions.

But *Notes* is even more than an account of life behind the Iron Curtain. It is the story of what happens when evil is officialized, trivialized, to the point where it is accepted as normal. It's a light flashing *Danger-Danger* to those of us who have forgotten that Western freedom is special and different, that it was once earned; men died so we could take it for granted, apologize for it, abuse it—and use it to glorify those who have created the Romanian reality. It's a brave book, written and published with courage—for who will believe it? Christopher Lasch maintains that truth has become less important than image: if it *seems* incredible there's no point in printing it because no one will believe it anyway. Mrs. Pilon has gently removed the rose-colored glasses of the innocents. She knows, she's been there—and back. While we were doing the Twist, she was trying to sleep on a wooden bench on a train carrying her family out of Romania. Then, we may have had the feeble excuse of ignorance: now we must listen and—what's harder—comprehend. □

# The Way It Was

**Tim O'Brien: *Going after Cacciato;* Delacorte Press; New York.**

by Edward J. Walsh

Stephen Crane, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Mailer, and Irwin Shaw wanted mostly to bring the battlefields to life; thus, their pages were full of whistling shells, gouged-out eyes, and wagonloads of rotting dead. Usually the blood-red god of war, as Crane called it, amounts to little more in the fiction of the realists than the stuff of melodramatic motion pictures that still run on late-night television. With craftsmen such as Crane, it lingers longer.

Once the tell-it-as-it-was reports have splashed and faded, the more reflective, or at least better-timed books appear, usually second-guessing the politicians and generals, often pacifist, often ideological. The obvious example is

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Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front,* and today, most of the deluge of Vietnam novels. Michael Herr's *Dispatches* was an anti-American diatribe set in the war zone; Phillip Caputo's *A Rumor of War* a well-crafted memoir that will probably not be improved on. Even so, Caputo's book is weak when it fixes on the larger questions: in wondering why we were in Vietnam, he fails to find answers more original than those offered in the past by Joan Baez, and so proves that being there does not guarantee clear thinking on all fronts.

It ought not to be expected that soldiers returning from the horrors of combat, or even several years removed from it, will mouth patriotic pieties. The older ones, officers and noncoms alike, usually do not like talking about what they saw and did in battle. And younger men, even those who were at first filled with excitement at the thought of going to war, mysteriously age quickly, as those who know them have always observed.

The veterans of Vietnam are no different in that sense than the men who fought at Chateau Thierry and Bastogne and Inchon. But the literature of Vietnam is immensely different, at least the second wave of it, different in that it leaves the battlefield to fix on moral questions that challenge all who care to be so challenged. *The Young Lions* and *The Naked and the Dead* could have been written about any war. Caputo's book, however, leaves the realm of art and becomes a quasi-political confession: his pat answers to questions about Vietnam dilute its impact. The same is not true of Tim O'Brien's *Going after Cacciato,* though O'Brien's politics are probably close kin to Caputo's.

It goes without saying that the American literary establishment will reflexively applaud anything in print that condemns the American involvement in Indochina. And as we have seen, little has been published about that tragic chapter in our history that does not rail against the immorality of American foreign policy, the corruptness of the Saigon regime, etc. Little noticed, until recently, were the consequences of the triumph of America's enemy in that conflict, and even now people like Irving Howe write pathetically that liberal opponents of the war had no way of knowing that rule by Hanoi would be worse than Saigon's. The literature of Vietnam has been a dreary cacophony of liberal clichés.

To the soldiers, the war in Vietnam was a war without a perceivable purpose. O'Brien writes that:

> "They did not know even the simple things: a sense of victory, or satisfaction, or necessary sacrifice. They did not know the feeling of taking a place and calling it victory. No sense of order or momentum. No front, no rear, no trenches laid out in neat parallels. No Patton rushing for the Rhine, no beachheads to storm and win and hold for the duration. They did not have targets. They did not have a cause."

The American antiwar movement spread lies of marauding U.S. infantrymen mowing down Oriental women and children, which proved convenient for the politburos in Hanoi and Moscow. The manipulators in Washington, having sent men to fight in Vietnam, abandoned them to pointless years of swamp patrols without inspiration or sense of purpose. As domestic political considerations led two administrations to soft-pedal even the thought of victory, agitprop à la Jane Fonda supplanted the advice of real soldiers in the Vietnam command posts as well as in the corridors of Washington. Vietnam became a public-relations headache for the American government. The troops, with no sense of what they were about but to survive, ignored orders, murdered officers, and consumed drugs on an epidemic scale. In *Going after Cacciato,* the terrifying lack of a sense of duty or purpose, or any traditional military objective is filled by the surreal mirage of Cacciato's flight. The fantasy world of the bedraggled buddies of third squad, first platoon, Alpha company is vastly different from the idyllic daydreams of vintage 1942 dogfaces of Ebbets Field and Coney Island. Paris—as distant from Vietnam as the U.S.A., but fabulous and unknown: "Gay Paree—bare ass and Frogs everywhere, the Follies Brassiere," says the burnt-out lifer, Lieutenant Corson. Above all, eons removed from the reality of Vietnam.

But Cacciato's odyssey is somehow real to Paul Berlin and his fellow troopers. O'Brien's chapters alternate between the squalid world of jungle fighting and the phantasmagorical trek across Asia and Europe as the squad follows in its imaginary pursuit of Cacciato. Then, from his observation post on his seemingly endless night watch, Berlin struggles to sort out what is real from what is the bizarre meandering of a deadened spirit.

Berlin, the individual who steps back from the nightmare of search-and-destroy missions, understands that the impressions of war men retain are of the details—the stink of the paddy mud, the rain; the innocent things, like scores of intersquad basketball games. The great issues of geopolitics that sent him and his comrades to a place named Quang Ngai, where a West Point-educated platoon leader gets his men killed by sticking to standard operating procedures, are as distant as the moon. But there was, as O'Brien's novel makes poignantly clear, a gnawing sense of something missing, that as American soldiers they had expected and deserved. The SAVAK policeman who arrests the squad in Tehran en route to Paris in Berlin's subterranean consciousness says it best: "Purpose is what keeps the soldier from running. Without purpose men will run. They will act out their dreams, and they will run and run, like animals in a stampede." Cacciato, the squad loner, the man with wit and a sense of who he was, ran, not to Paris, but simply—away, to be listed as missing in action. The rest of the squad did not chase him past the cliff where they last saw him. But, with nothing else to sus-



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tain them, they dreamed of Paris.

The virtue of O'Brien's novel is that it shuns polemics. He writes intensely of combat: the anticipation, mindless firing, counting bodies, and numbed recovery; it is enough to evoke either admiration of such succinct prose, or the fatuous assumption that the explicit horror of it all means that O'Brien is shocked at the very idea of Americans fighting communists in Southeast Asia. And reading O'Brien's reviewers, it seems that most of them stopped after skimming the dust cover, or wrongly thought that *Going after Cacciato* was meant to be another anti-war tract, if not in Herr's style, then in Caputo's. Thus O'Brien has been praised to the skies for his *technique* by journals that, during Vietnam, had exactly nothing to say about the hearts and minds of American soldiers.

Indeed, O'Brien has been called ingenious, but he is better than that. His book is a profound but unpretentious portrait of men at war in a war that was different because, for all they knew, they were utterly alone. The American armed forces as a whole emerged from the Vietnam war badly scarred, but individual soldiers who were lucky enough to be with units that supported them as men, particularly on the platoon and company level, returned strengthened by the intense communion with each other, which was all they had. O'Brien writes that last names or first names were dropped, the one or the other deemed unnecessary as long as each man had some identity. The exception is Lieutenant Sidney Martin, the brainy West Pointer who never understood why Vietnam was different than Hastings or St. Vith, and sent his men into tunnels to be slaughtered, until he himself needlessly died. Third squad, first platoon, Alpha company was one of those fortunate units. It could not hold Cacciato. But, with the acutely personal vision of the journey to Paris, it held the others.

It may be that the critical response to O'Brien's novel signals a subtle change in the American cultural mindset. Like *The Deer Hunter,* it has received its due of acclaim, though unlike the film, which was full of cinematic razzle-dazzle, it did not bring forth the usual curses of people of William Kunstler's ilk who read books. They may well have misunderstood O'Brien, it is easy to do so. His novel is complex and uneven in places, with passages of slippery writing and literary gimmicks. It may also be that there is a hesitancy to challenge a novelist who writes of an aspect of the war that rises above the clichés, especially while the new rulers of Vietnam have been sending their people off to drown.

But the converse may be true, at least for some. The war in Vietnam was based on bad strategy, but that strategy sprang from an idealism and presumptiveness of American military and spiritual strength that, if wrong for Vietnam, were nevertheless well-founded in history. That the American leadership could not immediately recognize the pitfalls of land war in Southeast Asia was, and is, understandable. But when the bloody abyss of the war was finally known to all, that leadership betrayed the spiritual legacy that had engendered the policy. This war, like all wars, was unwanted, but unlike all others, it was swept under the rug—"They had no cause," wrote O'Brien, by which he means they understood that the cause was sacrificed to the demands of vocal minorities at home, and ideological foes abroad. Opponents of the United States' role in Vietnam typically blamed it on America's spiritual bankruptcy, the arrogance of power, the military-industrial complex—a veritable bazaar of doctrinaire fanaticism. The aftermath in Vietnam and Cambodia has unmasked the pro-Viet Cong doublespeak as both sinful and doleful. *Going after Cacciato* tells us, finally, that the shibboleths of the '60s were all irrelevant, and even worse, opportunistic to the point of vice. Since the publication of O'Brien's subtle story, it is so much easier for an unbefuddled mind to call a spade a spade. □

# Modern Liberals & Intellectual Storm Troopers

**Harvey Mansfield: *The Spirit of Liberalism;* Harvard University Press; Cambridge, Massachusetts.**

**Alvin Gouldner: *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class;* Seabury Press; New York.**

**by Paul Gottfried**

Although these two books have as an overlapping theme the role of America's liberal intelligentsia in the surrounding culture, the difference between them is perhaps more significant than their similarity. One volume admonishes and occasionally chastises, while the other endorses what is supposedly humanity's last best hope, the intellectual Left. Still, oversights and omissions are to be found in both works. The nature of those oversights—depending on the gravity of the arguments considered—make both sarcasm and seriousness inevitably interrelated in approaching them.

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Mansfield's book, a collection of essays—what the French might call *essais de circonstance*—came into being over a period of several years. Pulling



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together reviews and papers into a single volume is, of course, no easy task; and Mansfield tries to accomplish this by weaving a central theme into both the introductory and closing chapters. Examining the problematic nature of liberal democracy, he focuses upon the conflicts between liberals and liberals and between liberals and democrats. According to his thesis, the American regime, in some ways, resembles the mixed government that Aristotle praises in book six of *The Politics.* Both Aristotle and the Founding Fathers saw the need to balance government by numbers with conditions designed to protect wealth and certain visible inequalities. But whereas Aristotle sought to sustain oligarchy by giving the rich privileged access to political position, the framers of our Constitution, taking a cue from John Locke, tried to temper democracy by authorizing rights. For, after all, who would benefit most from the rights to property and speech, if not those who were best at amassing wealth and swaying others with their speeches?

One obvious source of conflict in a mixed regime, known to the ancients and to Locke and Madison, was between numbers and wealth. One could therefore anticipate from the beginning that American politics would be marked by factional strife between liberal oligarchs and democratic levelers. What could not have been predicted, according to Mansfield, was the eruption of struggle among the prime beneficiaries of the liberal order, between intellectuals and businessmen, both of whom were intended to profit from the spirit of tolerance. For more than a generation, educators and publicists have appealed to popular envy in demanding the eradication of economic freedom. Meanwhile, men of practical affairs have expressed their contempt for the eggheads and have flaunted their anti-intellectualism. According to Mansfield this state of affairs bodes ill for liberalism, inasmuch as it involves the wholesale defection of those who should be spokesmen for the liberal order into the camp of democratic populism.

Although the exposition of Mansfield's central theme and his analysis of "modern liberals," especially of John Rawls, Charles Reich and Theodore Lowi, show argumentative skill of the highest order, bothersome oversights mar his presentation. For one thing, the term "liberal" is indiscriminately applied to political phenomena and personalities that span several centuries. For example, Mansfield has no compunctions in assigning the predicate liberal to both John Locke and the author of *The Greening of America.* Whereas the defender of English parliamentary monarchy is made into a liberal without qualification, the eulogist of America's hippie revolution is identified with "liberalism in moderation."

> "We do not know where he stands, and so we cannot tell whether we ourselves stand with him or against him."
>
> —*The New Republic*

Mansfield states his thesis too flatly to take proper account of his own historical situation. Is the "spirit of liberalism" endangered primarily because businessmen and intellectuals are seeking to exclude each other from its benefits? What seems more likely is that the Western liberal heritage—which is wide enough to include Madison, Locke, and Burke, but not hippie gurus—is being obliterated by a cult of irrationalism and sentimentality. The most serious cultural problem besetting our civilization is neither Locke's doctrine of natural rights nor spiteful liberal aristocrats who would deny rights to each other. The difficulty lies in the fact that educators, clergymen, professionals, and, yes, businessmen have all been permeated by the same culture of social and moral disintegration.

Nor have businessmen been more jealous of their economic liberty than have their supposed adversaries in the academy. As Daniel Bell has recently observed: "The cultural, if not moral, justification of capitalism has become hedonism, the idea of pleasure as a way of life." Cut off from traditional religious restraints and from a philosophical belief in liberty, as opposed to pure self-gratification, the capitalists themselves have, by and large, welcomed government regulations and controls—providing these might be used to exclude or throttle competition.

If I draw a bleak picture, it is partly to offset the overly cheerful one that Mansfield provides. I, for one, am not convinced by his repeated suggestion that our cultural agonies can be resolved by getting people to accept the game rules of our common Lockean legacy, the source of our present divisiveness and liberal national character. Mansfield is proposing a cease-fire, the conversion of Locke's natural rights and the American Bill of Rights into a foundation for provisional mutual tolerance. Supposedly by recognizing this DMZ, representatives of both the traditional and adversary cultures will be brought closer together. As a cultural historian, I am forced to doubt this implied conclusion. Without shared moral prescriptions and without what the new Left has described, albeit in a different sense, as a shared "meaningful past," the prospects for this consensus seem dim indeed.

* * *

During the past several years, conservative scholars have been writing about a new class of idea-mongers and bureaucrats single-mindedly dedicated to the undoing of America's business elite. Kevin Phillips has divided the participants in this struggle between traditional commodity producers and a rival group of journalists, academics, and service professionals. The term "new class," however, was the inven-



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tion of a dissident Marxist, Milovan Djilas, who in the 1950s criticized the communist functionaries and technocrats in his native Yugoslavia. Djilas designated *them* as the true beneficiaries of modern communist revolutions, rather than the proletariat.

Later Irving Kristol applied the same term to America's anticapitalist educators, journalists, and social engineers who were forming a common front against the mercantile community. On the basis of surveys and electoral returns, Kristol recognized that neither material poverty nor low social standing contributed substantially to America's current political radicalism. In 1972 the leftist McGovern fared better than the relatively conservative Nixon running as a presidential candidate in many wealthy communities. Conversely, Nixon held the edge in his contest with McGovern in numerous districts that had low median incomes and were traditionally Democratic. In one detailed study, Seymour Lipset demonstrates that the appeal of liberal politicians has become much greater among the educated and affluent than among the poor and less literate.

Daniel Bell ascribes this phenomenon to the fact that culture more than economics shapes modern social and political allegiances. Approval of feminism, sexual liberation, and anticapitalism serves to set apart today's educated person in much the same way as an Oxford accent might have done for a man of breeding in generations past. Kristol and Phillips, on the other hand, stress primarily social interest in their assessment of new class behavior. Educators, writers, and consultants are motivated by a desire for power; above all, they seek to replace America's commercial regime by one formed in their image. Thus they construct opportunistic alliances with porno peddlers, politicized lesbians and reactionary opponents of economic growth. What cements all these alliances are hostility to middle-class civilization and social resentment against supposedly philistine merchants, technologists, and doctors. These rancors bring the new class directly into the counterculture and cause it to identify with the misnamed consumer movement.

Alvin Gouldner, a self-styled Marxist and former classmate of Kristol's, defends the new class as an historical force, the totality of which he finds more impressive than any of its parts. At times he writes about it like one describing the effect of an irresistible power beyond human control. All about him Gouldner sees the emergence of a "world socioeconomic order, a New Class composed of intellectuals and technical intelligentsia." In advanced industrial regions this group is already at war for "control of the society's economy." It exerts influence through writing and communication, while instilling in its members a sense of "obligation to the collectivity as a whole." Since the new class is usually found in teaching and public service, its members can claim with justification to be "representatives of the whole society and guardians of its national traditions." In the developing nations the new elite often finds its social ascendancy unchecked. Placed among a largely illiterate population, it has the opportunity to take charge in social and national revolutions. Nonetheless, in the more educated West, the intellectuals are engaged in a struggle for a fixed number of academic and bureaucratic posts. Many feel thwarted in their professional and idealistic hopes and vent their resentment against the old class of businessmen and entrenched politicians.

To his credit, Gouldner does mention the excesses to which the new class goes in flaunting its contempt for bourgeois values. Nonetheless, he believes that the new order will triumph and free mankind in the process. Its membership continues to swell with each passing year, and no temporary setback has thus far reversed this process. The access of its members to "the full spread of culture" enables them to claim "that 'non-partisanship' which is the essence of all political legitimacy." In America they attack the banking and industrial elites and are helping to reform a country which still remains "the worldwide center of the old class." Meanwhile, the oppositionist intellectuals in the communist states, the counterparts to our social critics, embarrass their governments into tolerating dissent. Indeed even the Soviet new class, so often scorned as betrayers of the Revolution, are the ones now laboring for détente and "against the restoration of Stalinism and against the 'hards.' " Gouldner, however, interrupts this tale of bliss to call attention to the inadequacy of America's new class as coherent spokesmen for change. He prescribes the adoption of Marxism, which American intellectuals are urged to take more seriously: "With its special accent on 'the unity of theory and practice' and on the contextual analysis of historically concrete situations, Marxism is a specific corrective for the political limits built into the ideology of discourse common to the new class."

Ironically, Marxism may explain the ideological confusion that besets the author of these lines and the honored journals that lavish praise upon his analysis. Gouldner and his eulogists are led by their own class consciousness into a distorted view of reality. And so he writes in praise of all those who buy his books and provide him with grants to teach in Europe while holding an endowed chair at an esteemed American university. Shunning the honest discourse of barroom brawlers, he never refers spontaneously to his benefactors and associates as "buddies" or "swell guys." Rather, he writes of prodigious research, of ideas slowly taking shape, and of the train of thought by which he came to realize that his own class—he and his pals—would redeem the history of mankind.

Gouldner's book is not only intellectually vacuous, but its only possible redeeming feature is something which



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I cannot prove: namely, that it's a put-on from beginning to end. His definition of the new class is so laudatory as to be absurd. It includes all those with an alleged monopoly on culture, rationality, and universal compassion. But is it really a class he describes, or attributes of an imaginary perfect being? The new class is further made to resemble divinity in its omnipresence, for it somehow manages to embrace Ukrainian Baptists, Soviet commissars, and Jane Fonda all within a single circle of grace. Bankers and industrialists are alleged to have nothing to do with rational thought and discourse, unlike academically certified gurus and group sensitivity teachers who apparently do.

My point is not that Gouldner trivializes a controversial topic, but that he does so in an utterly ludicrous fashion. And perhaps (who knows?) *voilà la drôlerie!* For who can believe that anyone of universal culture would take more than a hundred pages of unspeakably tedious prose, punctuated by a medieval division into theses, to state a single self-serving opinion? Whether true or not, I shall choose to believe it's a spoof and that those who praise Gouldner's book are secretly in the know. Any alternative explanation for its production and success is simply too unsettling to consider. It might be mentioned that this volume forms the second part of a widely touted trilogy prepared in defense of the Marxist dialectic.* This datum, one hopes, may some day be useful in winning a game of trivia. □

*One overriding and predictable task of the trilogy is to demonstrate how Marx was right as an historical analyst, even though not the workers, but the new class, will now save capitalists and communist societies from oppression.

# Port-Wine Conservatism

**Benjamin A. Rogge: *Can Capitalism Survive?;* Liberty Press; Indianapolis, Indiana.**

by Otto J. Scott

It is inherently fallacious to criticize a speech from the viewpoint of literature, for oratory dominates a realm of its own. The public purpose of a speech may be to promote or defend some special position, but the speaker—to please his audience—must bend his talents toward uniting them in sympathy with himself. The words may be lofty and even wise, but the psychology of public speaking is closer to the stage than it is to literature.

For that reason speeches are the favorite vehicles of politicians. They are well aware that the most successful speaker is not necessarily the man with the best arguments, but the man best able to project an intelligent and sympathetic personality. FDR, a snob of the worst sort, who persistently regarded most other human beings as his inferiors, could project so warm and democratic a radio personality that he seduced virtually an entire generation into suspending their critical faculties. Yet there is nobody I know—not even the most anachronistic relics—who would today sit down with a collection of FDR's speeches in order to restore their faith in New Deal ideas.

Publishers know this, but they are tradesmen and know that books are purchased for a variety of reasons. They issue the collected speeches of famous men not because they expect them to attract readers forever, but because libraries like to fill their shelves with such trophies. In time such shelves attract magpie scholars in search of a pertinent quote. Before that final stage, however, collections of well-received speeches are apt to command fairly good sales as long as the orator is still active: both his friends and enemies are apt to buy the collection.

One should not be surprised, therefore, that Dr. Rogge's speeches, delivered before nearly a score of audiences in as many years, should be published by the Liberty Press. There is every good reason why the speeches of a conservative economist should be as available in every well-stocked public and private library and academic mill as are the effusions of frothy liberals of leftist tilt.

It would be cruel, some might say, to apply the yardsticks of literature and later events to these productions—but these are cruel times. At no time since Western civilization overcame the forests and animals of Europe, and created its diverse cities and cultures, have its heirs been so deeply menaced—or divided. We are in the position of Byzantium—after Alexius debased the *bezant* and thereby opened the chute which sent commerce, military strength and finally the empire spinning downward to oblivion. Suppose savants had then appeared to define Alexius' errors—and their repair? Would Byzantium have survived? The question is unanswerable, excepting by analogy. We are, after all, in a position analogous to that of Alexius' Byzantines. Our currency is debased and our credit is fading, our commerce is dwindling with our military strength; our rulers are repeating the mistakes of bygone barbarians. But unlike Alexius we have savants at hand who have an unparalleled knowledge of the lessons of history. We turn toward such an established scholar as Dr. Rogge with hope.

That hope is lured by the title of his first speech, and of his collected speeches: *Can Capitalism Survive?* Rogge uses the doleful prediction of Joseph Schumpeter as a springboard: he who said capitalism will collapse under the weight of its very success. That success will be so great, said Schumpeter, that people will forget its

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origins and the nature of its essential supports; intellectuals will carp, the people will decline to defend and the house will fall.

Dr. Rogge began by saying he did not agree with this, and then proceeded to accept—and repeat—some of the basic elements of the Schumpeter argument. Most significantly, he agreed that most people cannot see the connection between their own lives and the future of capitalism. In my opinion that is a serious underestimation; the average person has known for eons that he can achieve a livelihood and even prosperity in a free world—and he is equally well aware that governments are usually combinations created to take away that freedom. Dr. Rogge, therefore, accepted what he might better have denied.

Later in the same speech, however, Dr. Rogge turns on the intellectual, whom he describes as "by and large critical of the American businessman and the system of which he is a part," and as "an enemy of capitalism." Rogge also draws scornful attention to the businessman who "parrots the talk about . . . social responsibility" when his primary duty is to make profits (and open more jobs). The professor points out with accuracy that many businessmen were in favor of the Nixon wage and price controls before they were applied, and notes that Nixon—despite lip conservatism—moved the nation closer toward socialism and its controls.

These observations, which find the professor on several sides at once, are followed by the abrupt comment that "my self-assigned task here is one of diagnosis and not of prescription." He then concludes not by sounding any note of optimism of his own, but by citing the words of Adam Smith, who said that "the uniform, constant and uninterrupted effort of every man to better his condition . . . is frequently powerful enough to maintain the natural progression of things toward improvement, in spite of the extravagance of government, and the greatest errors of administration. Like the unknown principle of animal life, it frequently restores health and vigor to the constitution, in spite not only of the disease, but of the absurd prescriptions of the doctor."

However optimistic that may have sounded in Smith's Edinburgh, which had only to worry about the prescriptions of Commons and George III, it was followed by the French Revolution, which destroyed, for some bloody years "the effort of every man to better his condition," and by other, later, equally disastrous horrors. To cite Smith in this context seems both redundant and odd—but by the time the audience realized that, it was too late. Dr. Rogge had abandoned the argument leaving hopes and fears suspended in air.

On "The Philosophy of Freedom," however, Dr. Rogge comes forward with some impregnable statements about the virtues of a free economy and the individual responsibilities of mature adults. He shrewdly observes that those who favor both socialism and a free press contradict themselves. He explains how economic freedoms buttress all others, and observes that man's imperfections are magnified by power. Unfortunately power is one of man's attributes and its exercise can hardly be forbidden without reducing everyone to impotence. While Dr. Rogge is accurate, at least in the opinion of this reviewer, in his observation that a free market fits man's essential nature, it is also true that man's nature makes him eminently fit for the attempt to control others. In other words, in the absence of a definition of either virtue or sin, it is difficult to understand Dr. Rogge's tacit assumption that disembodied virtue can result in freedom of action by those unable to defend themselves, simply because it is best for society as a whole. It seems to me that those who assume the innate depravity of man, and who—as did Jefferson—advise strict curbs against those who would coerce others, have more evidence and less assumption on their side of the argument.

Dr. Rogge himself seems to have some discomfort over that, for later we find in another speech, "On Libertarian Philosophy," that although he believes marijuana laws should be repealed, child labor allowed and Yellowstone Park sold to the Disney Corporation, he still upholds conservatism on "most questions of social organization and social processes . . . in continuity, in the important role of tradition and custom, in standards for personal conduct, in the great importance of the elite (imperfect though they may be)." This sounds interesting if confusing, until we turn to the Rogge strictures against ideologues, a term he applies to true believers of virtually any strong faith, whether it is "the establishment of the one true religion, the elimination of race prejudice, the elimination of poverty, the implementation of the General Will or the eternal glory of the American or the French nation," or "any other beliefs as revealed by voices from burning bushes or by the magnificently objective results of science or in the massive and blind forces of history or in the dark and mysterious processes of the human mind or what-have-you."

Dr. Rogge, of course, is exaggerating. It is difficult to believe that he equates the civilizing influence of Christianity and Judaism with barbarism and superstition, or that he sees no difference between Israel and the USSR, France and the United States. If one were to take this diatribe seriously, all systems of thought would be declared idiotic, and people would be expected to cleanse their minds of all beliefs, and abandon all religion—which is clearly impossible. After all, even professors have to believe something; it is sad to reflect that some may be attached to causes as trivial—and as confined—as their schools and the subjects they teach.

But Dr. Rogge draws back from the actual cliffs he decries: what he means, he says, a little later, is that he does not "wish to see these influences on human behavior institutionalized in the hands of the state." He believes in society; he



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does not want the state to subsume what should be social—and private. That is very human and not very clear—Nock notwithstanding.

The fact is that when Dr. Rogge delivered that speech he was in the grip of libertarianism in its fashionable early phase, before it dithered into its present mindless anarchism. Speaking as one who considered himself a libertarian, Dr. Rogge scorns liberals who believe in a Pure Food & Drug Administration but who would shy at a Pure Books, Plays & Film Administration. Dr. Rogge made this comment before it became clear that liberals *are* in favor of censoring whatever is not liberal.

On the other hand, Dr. Rogge's own philosophy, as he propounded it then, is disarming. He believes, he said, that "it is the means that are used that are the most important." That is a nearly profound observation that evokes respect, and it is a shame that he follows it with the declaration that he, Rogge, is "no utopian, but believes that man left free to enjoy and suffer can at least fully attain the dignity and tragedy that comes with being a man." That is on the verge of silliness: surely Homer was no less a man for being a prisoner, and certainly circumstances do not make men. Later on Dr. Rogge makes it very clear that he himself knows that quite well. But it is also beginning to be clear to the reader at this juncture that he is reading speeches made at differing times to different audiences, with varying emphases made to rally and encourage the faithful and to woo the uncertain—delivered, in the libertarian mood, in the name of being free of fixed positions.

Later on, with an admirable change of pace, Dr. Rogge regaled an audience with a remarkably interesting description of Father Rapp's failed Indiana experiment and the equally galling collapse of Robert Owen's New Harmony on the same site. In this instance Rogge unearthed a quotation by L. Bolles regarding the illusion of the New Harmony people that they were ahead of their time. "The truth is," said Bolles, "they were not up to their times; that mankind, in point of real faith, was ahead of them. Their view that the evil in human nature is owing to outward surroundings, is an impeachment of the providence of God. But they have taught us one great lesson: and that is that circumstances do *not* make good men." To his everlasting credit Dr. Rogge was able to nearly equal that profound observation. "New Harmony," he concluded, "was a testament to man's capacity to delude himself about his real nature." That leaves open, however, the inevitable next question: what is man's real nature? We are not told. Those who continue to read will find more to delight, vex, encourage and dismay them. In "Christian Economics" the professor finds the term as ridiculous as Christian mathematics, and concludes there is no such animal. That is a reaction similar to that of the British scientists who concluded there was no such creature as a platypus—even when confronted with one.

On the other hand, *Can Capitalism Survive?* is a collection of speeches that, reduced to cold print, are bereft of Rogge's voice, wit, charm and personality. Delivered on various platforms in the press of events and in the presence of hundreds, they helped bring us all to the present promising stage of conservative thought far more than a late reader may realize. For that matter, this volume may itself enlist many more thousands. Certainly, nowhere will liberals find themselves more urbanely rebutted. And even though this volume is not, strictly speaking, literature, there is little doubt that its publication is excellent politics that, for once, is on the side of civilization. □

# Too Good to Be True

**Sir John Hackett, et al.: *The Third World War: August 1985;* Macmillan; New York.**

**by Alan J. Levine**

It may seem strange to suggest that a fictional version of World War Three might be enjoyable reading, but this book, a best seller in Britain and America, is that. And that is the trouble with it. Though gripping and well-written, this plea for a NATO rearmament drive is just too optimistic to be convincing.

"Looking back" from 1987, the authors give an historical account of a Third World War fought in the summer of 1985 with "conventional," nonnuclear weapons, its strategic pattern and setting resembling the First World War more than the Second. The authors assume that Soviet military power and aggressiveness will continue to grow, but between 1979 and 1984 the Western powers react by belatedly building up their own conventional forces. (Yet they have a Popular Front government taking power in France, and a continued shift to the communists in Italy.) Soviet power in southern and eastern Africa is consolidated, and a leftist overturn of the Egyptian government is followed by the seizure of most of the Arabian peninsula—the authors seem to imagine that Israel would permit this. Yugoslavia begins to disintegrate.

Faced with trouble in their Eastern European empire, and calculating that their strength is at a peak, the Soviets launch open aggressions in the Middle East, South Africa and then Yugoslavia. Soviet forces invading Yugoslavia clash with American marines; shortly after this the Soviets invade West Germany, with the limited aim of occupying it and causing NATO's collapse. The Soviets overrun Denmark, Austria, Italy, and

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much of Germany and the Netherlands. Thanks to the prewar build-up, the Allies just barely manage to hold the Soviets back from the Rhine long enough for reinforcements to fight their way across the Atlantic. Trouble develops in the Soviet rear, and their efforts outside Europe are defeated by South Africa. Here the story becomes both improbable and contradictory. Halted, the Soviets decide to pull out of the occupied areas. But they also decide to demonstrate their determination, and terrorize the West into submission, by a nuclear attack on Birmingham, England. The West replies by destroying Minsk. Before an all-out nuclear war can start, a group led by the Ukrainian Communist Party machine overthrows the Soviet government and makes peace. The Eastern Europeans and Central Asians break free of Russian control. Though some rivalry between an improbable Chinese-Japanese alliance and the West develops, the downfall of communism, we are told, is assured.

"... the chroniclers of *The Third World War* urge us to support our local military-industrial complex, and to watch out for the Soviets when they begin to slip."

—*Time*

"The book doesn't really have much to say about war . . . most of it is what you would expect from a group of generals."

—*Esquire*

*The Third World War* gives an excellent picture of the sheer complexity of modern warfare; command, communications, weapons and logistics are skillfully outlined. As a plea for a NATO build-up it is entirely convincing. Time and again in recounting the fictional military build-up that allows the West to barely repel an invasion, the authors cleverly show just how weak the West is, not only on the ground, but also in air defense, tactical airpower and anti-submarine warfare. In their view a surprise invasion of Western Europe could not now be defeated except by using tactical atomic weapons, which they believe would quickly lead straight to an all-out nuclear war. I think, however, that their picture of what would happen even if an invasion were stopped is too optimistic. But that just emphasizes the importance of being strong enough to deter such an invasion from starting in the first place.

It should be recalled that predicting the nature and course of future wars is necessarily a tricky business. With a few generally ignored exceptions, such as the Polish banker Bloch, few people foresaw that World War I would last a long time. Few expected the trench deadlock, or America's entry into the war. Predictions about the course of World War II were about as far off. Few people expected the Nazi-Soviet pact, though a defecting Soviet official had warned of Stalin's plans for it in 1938. The Nazis' rapid conquest of Western Europe surprised almost everyone; Britain's decision to fight on, and its success in doing so, was unexpected outside of the English-speaking countries. The West generally expected that the Nazis would overrun the Soviet Union in three months, that Germany would surrender when the Allies reached her frontiers, and that Japan would have to be invaded. The effectiveness of bombing was overrated early in the war, while in 1939 many considered the submarine a minor weapon, and thought major amphibious invasions impossible. And the span of time and the amount of technological change between the World Wars was less than that between V-J Day and today. Though Sir John Hackett and his colleagues are far from dogmatic in tone, the unreliability of prediction in this field cannot be too strongly emphasized.

A number of aspects of *The Third World War* seem improbable. Generally speaking, it is unlikely that a communist ruling group would adopt a policy as "adventuristic" as that described, unless the military balance had become so skewed that it was clear that victory at any level of warfare was certain. If the Soviets were to employ their own military forces short of an all-out war, or launch a major war by proxy, it is likely (on the basis of their previous record) that they would launch one crisis at a time, not several as the authors suggest. Chopping off one slice of the noncommunist world at a time is more their style. Trouble in Eastern Europe would probably cause the Soviets to temporarily draw back and concentrate on pacifying their empire, not to push on into Western Europe. On the other hand, it is hard to see an American President sending troops to stop Soviet intervention in a Yugoslav civil war.

Hackett's assumptions about what would happen if a Soviet offensive were stopped seem far too optimistic. It is unlikely that resistance in Eastern Europe or in newly occupied areas would flare up as quickly as he thinks, or be as much of a nuisance to the Soviets as he supposes. More important, it is improbable that the Soviets would either let go of conquered areas or launch a single nuclear attack on the West; and doing both of these things at once would make no sense at all. There are several other possibilities that are more likely—and even more unpleasant. First, they might try to bargain with the occupied areas and call for an armistice which would leave them much or all of what they had seized. Second, they might decide to play out the string, hoping to regain the upper hand by bringing reinforcements from Asia, while standing on the defensive and repelling any Allied counteroffensive, and strangling the Allies with a submarine campaign. (Hackett calculates that 25% of the vital, heavily-escorted reinforcement convoys would be destroyed



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in crossing the Atlantic.) The authors think that the high rates of consumption of supplies and of destruction of material would enforce a short war. But while that may mean that *campaigns* would be short, it does not guarantee that *wars* will be. Third, the Soviets might introduce tactical nuclear weapons, calculating that a surprise attack would give them victory, and that the West would be unwilling to use strategic nuclear weapons. Fourth, and worst, the Soviets, if really bold, or absolutely desperate, might launch a full-scale nuclear "counterforce" attack against the Western powers. The authors' failure to discuss the strategic nuclear balance is one of the main failings of the book. There are also many improbabilities in the postwar era they depict, but that is so speculative that it seems hardly worth criticizing. However, it seems wildly unlikely that Germany would remain divided if the Soviets were expelled from Eastern Europe. Except in the event of a genuine revolutionary upheaval, as opposed to the intra-Party coup they depict, it is unlikely that the Soviet Union would break up. If it did, it would be far from the neat process they suggest.

However, such criticisms do not detract from the lessons implicit in *The Third World War.* In fact, they reinforce them. A conventional war in Europe, which our present weakness may invite, would be even more dangerous than the authors suggest. The best way to avoid it is to cure that weakness. Unfortunately it is hard to believe that this will be done, though it would not be difficult. Since the early 1950s it has always been perfectly possible for Western Europe to construct defenses capable of repelling any Soviet attack, probably even without American help. Unfortunately the European governments have preferred to let European defenses and unity slide, while depending on a decaying American nuclear superiority. The political maturity and savvy, in which Europeans have such boundless pride, may be in for some hard testing in the years to come. □

# The Untold Teller

**Edward Teller: *Energy from Heaven and Earth;* W. H. Freeman & Co.; San Francisco.**

**by H. Peter Metzger**

There is no question but that future historians will be kind to Edward Teller, but that must be scant comfort to him now. In yet another malicious snub of their favorite *bête noire,* Teller and his latest book are being ignored by America's intelligentsia.

In a time when any academic barsweep, merchandising antinuclear mendacity, can count on a bootlicking welcome by the talk-show whiz-bangs, and demand a fawning review from any of the country's most respected newspapers, we are treated to the spectacle of a book of authentic and enduring quality languishing virtually unreviewed and attended only by those who look elsewhere than the media for news of one of America's most productive and inspired minds.

The reasons are clear: while Teller's book addresses all of the important aspects of the nation's energy problems, it does so both accurately and nonideologically. Accordingly, it does not arrive at the trendy conclusions necessary for media acceptance today: that solar is great and profit is bad, that oil companies are rip-off artists and nuclear power is wicked. Moreover, the way Teller has of presenting technical matters in ordinary language robs his opponents of their last excuse for ignorance on energy questions; what he says is so accessible and understandable that all his foes can do is to denounce lucidity as oversimplification.

The book covers energy's origins and sources, from the cosmic to the comic, from "Prometheus to the oil embargo." Naturally, Teller covers the normal shopping list to be expected in an energy book (oil, coal, nuclear, fusion, solar) and even "Plans and Policies" for the future. But what I find most absorbing are his incidental observations along the way. They are not only entertaining but stimulating, one of the treats to be found in the contemporary observations made by a brilliant man.

Did you know that "when the first man built the first fire on earth, the solar energy that is reaching us now had already been produced and was on its way from the center of the sun toward its surface?"

I have always wondered how geology can explain how some natural gas reservoirs got as deep as they are, considering that they all are supposed to be of biological origin. I also knew that natural gas-like compounds are present in extraterrestrial space and are thought to be involved in the planet-forming processes. Teller combines these facts with the suggestion that natural gas of nonbiological origin may have been formed in huge quantities early in the evolution of our planet. Thus, some of our deeper natural gas deposits might better be explained by thinking of them as being connected with vulcanism than with the remnants of life usually found in sedimentary deposits.

Teller then makes the following observation: "If this view is correct, natural gas might turn out to be in much more ample supply than we now suspect, providing we look for it in the right places." In other words, if we drill deep enough, natural gas reservoirs of nonbiological origin might be discovered which would be so enormous that

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no way would exist to even estimate their size.

In a discussion of coal, Teller presents his own equally unique and unconventional theory of how some coal is formed, but I'll let you read that one for yourself.

Teller, of course, is best known for his invention (with Stan Ulam) of the thermonuclear explosive and for his promotion of the development of the hydrogen bomb. It is for this that Western liberals have never forgiven Teller, and they have painted him as a Strangelovian bomb-lover ever since. But as it turned out, Teller was right after all. He warned that unless we rushed with the invention of the Super-bomb, as it was called in those days, then Russia would develop the H-bomb first.

I'll bet you didn't know that the Russians really did invent the H-bomb first. However, notice I said "bomb," not "device." It was on October 31, 1952, that the Teller-Ulam invention, the first thermonuclear explosion (it was called "Mike"), vaporized the island of Elugelab in the Eniwetok atoll in the South Pacific. But that explosion was produced by a huge device that could hardly be considered a deliverable weapon, for it was mainly a huge hydrogen-liquefier (refrigeration) plant. It was only eight months later that the Russians produced their first H-blast, "Joe-four," but theirs used dry (lithium deuteride) fuel and was thus "deliverable" and therefore virtually a true practical weapon. It was seven months after "Joe-four" that we detonated "Bravo," our first "dry-bomb" type blast.

Suppose we had listened to the "Men of Peace," like Robert Oppenheimer (wartime director of Los Alamos Laboratory, and the "Father of the A-bomb"), who advocated that America not develop the H-bomb at all. Oppenheimer's approach would have invited war by destroying the nuclear weapons parity that has kept the two superpowers in a stable, if uneasy, stand-off for nearly three decades. But somehow, out of all of this, Teller became known as the warmonger and Oppenheimer the man of peace. That becomes even more ironic when you recall that it was Teller, back at wartime Los Alamos (and the Franck Committee in Chicago), who advocated a demonstration drop of the first A-bomb on an uninhabited Japanese island to convince Japan to surrender, and it was Oppenheimer and others (the Interim Committee) who vigorously promoted the tactic finally adopted, which was to drop atomic bombs on large civilian population centers. So, then as later, Teller advocated the correct, more sensible and humane position, always unpopular with the media, while the "Men of Peace" advocated a plan which would have led to war. And that's just what's happening today.

Teller advocates a strong energy policy based on conventional methods. Yet in the press he takes the back pages to "Men of Peace" of another era, who promise what they can't deliver: energy both clean, abundant and nearly free. But like the Reverend Jim Jones promoting the virtues of Kool-Aid, there is only one certainty in all of their claims: when the lights finally go out, their reckless lies, as well as they, themselves, will drown with the rest of us in the all-engulfing darkness. □

# Evil and a Large Economic Unit

**Robert Hessen: *In Defense of the Corporation;* Hoover Institution Press; Stanford, California.**

**by Harold C. Gordon**

Dr. Robert Hessen has defended the corporation on grounds that will startle many: he maintains that anyone who would deny or destroy corporate rights is really attacking individual rights. This argument challenges a deeply ingrained prejudice. Americans have always distrusted impersonal aggregations of power—big government, big labor, and especially big business. Indeed, the current assault on the corporation is based on the claim that large economic units are inherently evil. Our new trustbusters, Sen. Edward Kennedy and his bureaucratic cohorts, want to disallow all mergers and acquisitions by big firms unless these transactions are found to be "socially useful." Ralph Nader advocates federal chartering of corporations as a way of making them more "democratic" and "subservient to the public interest."

It looks as if the neopopulists are attempting to make a social case against industrial concentration because they can no longer make a convincing economic one. Extensive research by Yale Brozen, Harold Demsetz, and other scholars has undermined the myth that corporate giants do not compete. On the contrary, they consistently vie with each other to turn out new and better products at the lowest possible cost.

Because the attacks on the corporation have shifted from the economic to the social front, those who would restructure the corporation advance the theory that corporations are "creatures of the state" and may be altered at will by the people's representatives. Hessen rejects this view as reactionary. Its roots lie in Tudor and Stuart England, when kings awarded exclusive commercial rights to their favorites. As these rights originated with the sovereign, and could be revoked at his pleasure, corporations then were truly "creatures of the state." They remained so until the last century. In America, after the Revolution, state legislatures assumed the prerogative of issuing corporate charters. During this

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period, corporations retained their quasi-public character. In exchange for certain privileges from the state—a legal monopoly, exemption from taxes, and even the power of eminent domain—they would provide banks, harbors, canals, streets, and other public works. Then, as now, the idea was to make private capital serve the public good. But the idea didn't work. State monopolies were denounced as oppressive and exploitative, and their abolition was a prime goal of the Jacksonian reformers.

Accordingly, in 1837, Connecticut passed the first all-purpose general incorporation statute. Thereafter, a corporate charter would issue automatically to anyone who filed articles of incorporation with a state official. Other states —and Great Britain in 1844—followed suit. The corporation thus passed, in the words of A. A. Berle, "from a time when [it] really did represent a bargain between a group of people and the state to a time when the state merely granted permission to a group of people to make an *agreement between themselves.*"

This transition is crucial to understanding the rights of corporations in today's society. As Hessen observes: "Quite literally, the government plays a smaller role in the creation of a corporation than of a marriage." Government does not create corporations, it simply recognizes the right of citizens to do so. "When individuals join together in a voluntary venture, they neither gain nor lose any rights. Regardless of the form they choose for their organization . . . it can only acquire and exercise those rights which its members possess as individuals—nothing more and nothing less."

Critics of the corporation would dismiss this argument as naive. It might have had some force when corporations were small, closely-held affairs, and the stockholders exercised real control over them. But management has long since been divorced from ownership. The people who run the large corporations are really accountable to no one. It is therefore as much in the interest of the stockholders as that of the general public that the government more closely regulate corporate activities.

However, Hessen says that the separation of ownership and management is nothing new. As early as the twelfth century, Italian merchants formed limited partnerships with investors who did not want to become involved in the decision-making process. Nor is there anything reprehensible about this arrangement. Despite Ralph Nader's efforts to convert the corporation into a plebiscitary democracy, most stockholders prefer to leave the management function to professionals. Yet this does not mean that they are powerless; if a stockholder is dissatisfied with the way the corporation is being run, he can always sell his shares. If enough stockholders do the same, the corporation is liable to be bought out, and a new board of directors installed. In this respect, Sen. Kennedy's bill to restrain mergers and acquisitions might chiefly benefit corrupt or incompetent managers.

The "small is beautiful" rationale put forth by Kennedy, Nader, and the rest is deceptive. In reality, it masks a drive to give the federal government absolute power to mold our economy. Dr. Hessen's hardheaded defense of corporate rights is a call to arms against such encroachment. □

## Commendables

# Borges' Solitude

**Emir Rodriguez Monegal: *Jorge Luis Borges: A Literary Biography;*** E.P. Dutton; New York.

by Mary Ellen Fox

It is a massive and impressive volume which tells us that the Argentinian Borges is one of the century's greatest writers, perhaps already a part of all mankind's literary history. It is meticulously researched and well-written, in keeping with a dignified monographic tradition. The successful literary historian is, in this instance, a Uruguayan, Professor Monegal from Yale's Latin American Studies Department. He is unabashedly in love with and in awe of his subject, and he thoroughly substantiates his feelings.

Borges emerges from his pages as a complex and revelationary philosopher-artist. His momentousness in our world is both puzzling and enriching: he is a fascinating introvert in an epoch which has reduced introversion to intolerable platitudes. He looks inward for discoveries; his own fears, dreams, nightmares, and symbols are not only triumphant in evading neuroses, but they also turn into a wealth of spiritual strength. In Monegal's interpretations, Borges' ability to personalize universal myths—an ancient virtue—acquires an avant-garde ring—one of the mysteries of his literary greatness.

The personal/universal do an odd tango in his pages, both parties equally intense and passionate. Masks, mirrors, labyrinths, legends, nativist sagacities, urban mythologies become intellectual requisites of a unique theater of artifice and thought. Paradox, literary twists and hoaxes, playfulness, irony, humor, wit, literary curiosities and a profound love of the wisdom and legacy of the past join in the never-ending cortège. Western ethos is endlessly probed in the most unexpected ways.

In the news, we can read about another marginal, obscure Greek poet who just received the Nobel Prize for literature. He may be a treasure to his

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own land and language, but he has contributed little to who we are and how we perceive our time and more. Borges is 80 years old. For those who have read him—and there are millions around the globe—he has created another dimension of ourselves, of some of our most inexpressible recognitions. Conrad went to the grave without the Nobel Prize, as did Proust and Joyce and Nabokov. Those who got it in their stead are today lifeless lines in reference books, while *Lord Jim* and *Ulysses* are alive. Must there always be demeaning bitterness in posthumous victories? Or—is leaving this world unrewarded for great deserts just the ultimate in human solitude? □

## In Focus

# An Empty Mosaic

**Elizabeth Hardwick:** ***Sleepless Nights;*** Random House; New York.

It is a "very short novel," or a collection of memories, or, according to the jacket blurb, a blend of fact and fiction. But where fact leaves off and fiction begins is unintelligible. Ms. Hardwick's reminiscences follow no discernible pattern, chronologically or topically. From the title one can envision a woman seated at a writing desk in a dark room lit by a single lamp, scribbling memories at random, as they drift down through the years.

But her scribbling can be penetrating and lyrical. While the memories seem not quite profound, some of them evoke vivid images. Billie Holiday, for one, emerges as a touching presence, both vulnerable and imposing, as in both life and legend.

Too many memories and insights, though, seem to promise more than they deliver. Ms. Hardwick asks questions—of herself and others, of life itself—which she declines to answer, or even to ponder. The questions, like her past, are simply there, impervious to impartial investigation. The contrast between her Kentucky youth and her New York adulthood falls short of being stark; her interest in the lives of cleaning women could produce trenchant insights, but she stops short of that. Instead of probing a thought, she only displays it. Altogether, it amounts to a literary mosaic—attractive, often poignant, even beautiful, but with curiously little inner substance or meaning. (BK) □

## Waste of Money

# Ehrlichman's Cynical Naiveté

**John Ehrlichman:** ***The Whole Truth;*** Simon & Schuster; New York.

There are no political novels, only novels about wars, revolutions, conquests, subjugations or ideology. Literature does not portray the reportable, according to Conrad, slightly rephrased. Only when it becomes history may politics serve as literary subject matter; otherwise, it's journalism in book form, thus even more mendacious and unreliable than in the daily papers or on TV. Some believe that the only novel of politics that succeeded as literature was *The Charterhouse of Parma,* in which Stendhal, by proving that love is an art of governing, eventually wrote a political novel: his Count Mosca is a politician, so in love that he therefore creates political acts. Shakespeare and Friedrich Schiller also blended politics and love, but in drama, which for some reason comes up with more convincing results than a novel.

Thus, the so-called Washington novel of the last few years is, at best, about how journalists see power—their insights into and interpretations of the realms of love and politics, which are gossipy and embarrassingly shallow by nature. A certain Mr. William Safire, a columnist, came closest to literature in his "political novel" of a couple of years ago. Yet, his crudeness of touch, advertising techniques and reportorial skills, when used to explain vanity or psychology in fiction, proved that he had not succeeded in transcending his trade. Mr. Ehrlichman's opus is neither truth (even less "whole"), nor a novel (without the qualifier "pulp"), nor about politics. It's a fantasy of a wholly and truthfully unoriginal (ordinary, in fact) mind. □

# Only in America

**Winzola McLendon:** ***Martha: The Life of Martha Mitchell;*** Random House; New York.

Why do American publishers engage in the dissemination and propagation of idiocy? Why does liberal democracy openly make insipidity its ally and its weapon for subjugating the American culture? We have no answers to these questions. But we are quite positive that it would be a waste of time to submit to Random House, the top liberal publishing firm, an adulatory biography of John Dos Passos, a major American novelist who died a conservative, or the life story of Professor Gordon Chalmers, who was the president of Kenyon College, an original American thinker on education, and one who happened to brilliantly synthesize the phenomenon of the unholy alliance between the liberal culture and foolishness. But a hagiographic biography of a pathetic woman, perennially drunken and drugged, who happened to help the liberals to grind up Nixon, is published with fanfare. Her caricatural antics, so useful at the time, are not left unre-



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warded. Ms. McLendon's book tries to make a dignified portrait from a caricature—that is something that's usually done the other way around. □

## Stage

# Ineptitude as Manifesto

**Israel Horovitz: *The Primary English Class;* St. Nicholas Theatre Company; Directed by Gerald Gutierrez.**

The drama (play, comedy, allegory, skit or trifle—whatever suits one) takes place in a classroom at night, according to the program. We can infer from the remarks of the characters that the action goes on in New York and in the present. In essence, there's nothing wrong with such economy of environmental indications—the theatrical avant-garde has seen some high artistic value in inauthenticity for roughly a century; after all, for a metaphor to efficiently serve as such it must be murky, universal and vague. What's wrong with Horovitz's play (drama, *commoedia,* etc.) is that his great metaphor is either so abysmally profound that I, at least, had trouble penetrating its universality, haziness and ambivalence, or so utterly banal that most of us would have difficulty in classifying it as a metaphor at all.

Israel Horovitz is a so-called "solidly committed" playwright with impeccable radical credentials, one of the multi-anti-voices of the '60s and early '70s. He was dutifully and obligingly against the war, the system and assorted corruptions, and has duly conformed to all the preordained postures. Nonetheless, he wrote passionate and skillful theatrical manifestos in sincere concord with his beliefs about who was guilty of what and why the society was as bad as it seemed to him —which resulted in two above-average plays, *The Indian Wants the Bronx* and *Shooting Gallery.* One would assume that at the age of 40 he would have collected enough overall insight, professional expertise and philosophical maturity to have something to say. Not so. Advertising copy calls *The Primary English Class* "an explosive comedy," and one who reads these words cannot help but wonder where the limit is to euphemism in modern cultural marketing—which Mr. Horovitz, given his ideological persuasion, should consider to be one of our worst social ills.

A viewer may suspect that *The Primary English Class* reveals to us that people cannot communicate because of the diversity of languages. This has already been noticed in the Bible, but Mr. Horovitz is looking for a modern interpretation. "Language is the first mask," he announces in his *Notes* to the play, but he fails to demonstrate it on stage. Instead, he puts up a show of incoherence and improbability. He wants us to believe that people from around the world come to Manhattan without the knowledge of a single word of English, even the adjective English itself; or that they are unable to expound, even through sign language or gesticulation, that their glasses are missing, and that such a condition impairs their vision. His extremes of making people totally incommunicado may have some surrealistic intention, but there's a marked difference between symbolism and surrealism in the theatre: the former is the message, the latter the method or form, and not knowing what serves what is simple ineptitude. Mr. Horovitz's German is portrayed by his clicking his heels and the Frenchman by his garrulousness—as if these were the most intrinsic substances of Germanness and Frenchness *anno* 1979. Moreover, the inevitable judgment of Americanism amounts to saying that it means only psychotic aggression, idiocy and destructiveness when dealing with other nations. So much for *domo sua.* Thank you.

The St. Nicholas Theatre Company production is mildly mediocre, the acting correct and uninspiring—except for the part of the American teacher, in which a young and talented actress valiantly struggles with the hysterical gibberish imposed upon her by Mr. Horovitz. (ES) □

### Books in the Mail

***The Eighteenth Day: The Tragedy of King Leopold III of Belgium*** by Rémy, translated by Stanley R. Rader; Everest House Publishers; New York. A defense of the honor and patriotism of a man who was used as a scapegoat during World War II.

***Capitalism and Socialism: A Theological Inquiry*** edited by Michael Novak; American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research; Washington, D.C. Transcripts from a conference which examined the importance of religion and spiritual values in the formation of public policy.

***Keep Off the Grass: A Scientific Enquiry into the Biological Effects of Marijuana*** by Gabriel G. Nahas, O.B.E., M.D., Ph.D.; Pergamon Press; New York. A look at the short and long-term effects of marijuana use.

***Economic Policy: Thoughts for Today and Tomorrow*** by Ludwig von Mises; Regnery/Gateway, Inc.; South Bend, Indiana. A series of six lectures, delivered in simple terms, in which von Mises relates his economic theories.

***Reflections on History*** by Jacob Burckhardt; Liberty Fund, Inc.; Indianapolis. A new printing of a classic by a master historian of the 19th century.

***About Face: The China Decision and Its Consequences*** by John Tierney, Jr.; Arlington House Publishers; New Rochelle, New York. A collection of expert viewpoints on the importance of Taiwan in U.S. foreign policy.

***Free & Unequal: The Biological Basis of Individual Liberty*** by Roger J. Williams; Liberty Fund, Inc.; Indianapolis. A look at man's inherent physical differences for the purpose of refuting the "uniformity" theory of human nature which has gained popularity in our time.



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## Screen

# Not-All-Too-Bad Kids and Inept Blasphemy

*Breaking Away;* Directed by Peter Yates; Written by Steve Tesich; 20th Century-Fox.

*Peppermint Soda;* a film by Diane Kurys; a Gaumont/New Yorker Films Release.

*Monty Python's Life of Brian;* Directed by Terry Jones; Written by Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin; Handmade Films.

by Eric Shapearo

W. C. Fields, that great visionary, may have had the right instinct: during the last two decades, we have begun to realize that neither the atom bomb, nor bolshevik Russia, nor the corruption of power are the real threats to America. It has begun to dawn on us that the supreme danger is kids. The word "kid," in itself, is full of treachery and traps. "Kid" is not a homogenous notion which works at many levels of normal consciousness. A four-year-old kid can already carry the miasma of lethal disruption of reality; a 12-year-old can menace our most cherished principles and our very sense of civilization; an 18-year-old can breed debaucheries, both carnal and mental. And recently, the 30-year-old kid has become a symbol of malignant incoherence, a feeble-minded, mostly drugged burden to society, who occasionally throws bombs at police precincts and whom the liberal press calls a socially frustrated kid when he is caught. We did not heed the advice of Fields, who recommended strangling kids the moment they made their "kidness" into an argument: consequently, we had Berkeley, Charles Reich and Yippies.

Now, two movies tell us that perhaps we were not completely wrong in refraining from the mass-murder of kids. *Breaking Away* is exceptionally convincing. Its picture of life and people is shamelessly romanticized (what's wrong with that?) and has the power to stay with us for a good while after we leave the movie house and come home to watch the dreary news on TV. The film brings back an attractive goodness in a remarkably unobtrusive way. In my generation, we had movies that stayed well-ensconced for decades in "the dark chambers of our imagination"—as the biblical prophet Ezekiel described this part of our awareness with his literary elegance. Later, these same films were tried before the liberal culture's kangaroo courts and convicted of distortion, or falsification of reality; but then, not long ago, they were paroled as camp and nostalgia. Even if their idealism was a fib, so what? They enriched us, while their absence today impoverishes us. They knew how to be disturbing without being destructive. And *Breaking Away,* a sort of *Bildungsroman* in a hamburger-pizza-stand landscape, rescues something of their almost forgotten flavor. The story is about an Indiana working-class boy who discovers the taste of defeat and triumph, that life is both ugly and lovely, and how the class consciousness of someone who is 19, and in the very middle of America, can be a source of strength and joy, not hatred and disdain *à la Mother Jones.*

There's no such idealized unity of tone in *Peppermint Soda,* a French tale about two sisters, 13 and 15 years of age. They are in the midst of the torments of feminine puberty. The older sister approaches the dilemmas of growing up with routine recipes and somewhat stereotyped unconcern. The younger still dwells in a muddle of murky girlishness, and thus is much more interesting. There's a light touch in their quandaries of high school life and the process of their acculturation into womanhood. It would sound like platitude to call this the Gallic sense of humor, rather, it's nested in the director's empathy with their condition. They are both believable and appealing. Their love for their mother, while sailing through the roily waters of a split family home and so-called modern lifestyle in the contemporary urban choas, somehow becomes more precious than if it were framed by *Little House on the Prairie* attitudes. Diane Kurys has an insistently sketchy style. She thinks, perhaps, that it loads her film with allusions and innuendos. Rather, it makes it a bit fuzzy.

* * *

I was an unabashed fan of the Monty Python group and genre as long as their subject matter was idiocy. They were great when they commented on this elemental and cataclysmic force which, perhaps, rules mankind's history to a larger extent than we dare to admit. However, when the boys' endeavors in the domain of imbecility scored prodigiously, their vanity grew in proportion to their success. They decided to put their exertions into commenting on philosophy. This fateful mistake turned them into idiots, and *Life of Brian* serves as a perfect example of their pratfall.

The movie is about Christianity's dawn. Religious feelings are among the most complex and valuable of human instincts: how can they be examined in art and drama without sounding offensive? A difficult question, endemic to Western civilization. Anatole France, an agnostic, created Abbé Coignard, a Catholic priest, who both sins and regrets in such a touching way that reading his adventures brings to the Church more benefit than harm. France certainly did not want to help religion, but his genius kept telling him that since faith is profundity and human warmth, using



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derision against it would certainly backfire. *Life of Brian,* which artistically is an assemblage of mostly dull, frantically noisy and underdeveloped skits, tries to do exactly what France knew to avoid: it presents religion as twaddle. The effect is like discussing phenomenology on *Saturday Night Live*—a doleful flop. □

## Music

# Truth Through the Art of Riff

**Josef Skvorecky: *The Bass Saxophone;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.**

by Douglas A. Ramsey

It is possible, although I have seen no serious defense of the idea, that the recent defections to the United States from among the ranks of the Bolshoi Ballet had their inspiration in political ideology. Even fellow members of the Bolshoi company, however much they have attempted to devalue the talents of the defectors, have rather wistfully agreed that the Koslovs and Aleksandr Godunov wished for the opportunity to explore areas of dance forbidden by the Soviet Union. There is little possibility of establishing an underground ballet company to perform avant-garde works late at night in the cellars of Moscow and Kiev, and no chance of sneaking modern dance movements into the traditional repertoires of state-controlled Soviet ballet companies. The thought of some daring performer slipping a few Martha Graham touches in among the prettinesses of *Swan Lake* is alluring but ludicrous. So the Nureyevs, Baryshnikovs and Godunovs defect.

In literature, painting and music, the opportunities for defiance are broader. The *samizdat* is well known, as are the punishments of those who dare to write for it. Defection is once again the answer for a few who are courageous and lucky, or who have accumulated enough international fame to provide a kind of immunity.

Those within repressed societies who wish to absorb the output of banned artists find ways of doing it. Modern paintings hidden away and surreptitiously enjoyed, rumpled *samizdat* manuscripts passed from hand to hand, phonograph records purchased on the black market, tape recordings endlessly dubbed and redubbed; all of this involves degrees of heroism. Elsewhere* I have written about the strange encounter during World War II between the editor of this journal and a Nazi soldier. Leopold Tyrmand, a Polish forced laborer in Germany, discovered by chance that the soldier was a fellow jazz enthusiast. At considerable risk, they spent a Sunday afternoon in a rowboat in the middle of a river, alternately spelling one another at the oars and the crank of a wind-up phonograph, listening to the recordings of Benny Goodman.

There are no doubt millions of stories about people putting themselves in peril to enjoy what they seek in art. But to create under circumstances of repression and fear, knowing that detection could mean the end of everything, seems even more daring. That, in part, and on the surface, is Skvorecky's theme in the poignant title story of *The Bass Saxophone,* and, more explicitly, in "Red Music," the essay that begins the book. Skvorecky, growing up in occupied Czechoslovakia, was a semi-professional dance band tenor saxophonist consumed by the "forceful vitality," the "explosive creative energy" of jazz. He and his fellow musicians did not think of their beloved jazz as protest music, ". . . but of course, when the lives of individuals and communities are controlled by powers that themselves remain uncontrolled—slavers, czars, fuhrers, first secretaries, marshals, generals and generalissimos, ideologists of dictatorships at either end of the spectrum—then creative energy becomes a protest." Jazz, he says, "was a sharp thorn in the sides of the power-hungry men, from Hitler to Brezhnev, who successively ruled in my native land."

The essay catalogues the ways in which jazz survived in Europe under the Nazis; secret jam sessions with hidden lookouts, phony song titles ("The Wild Bull" for "Tiger Rag," "Evening Song" for "Stardust"), forbidden reception of short wave broadcasts, band arrangements smuggled in by Wehrmacht officers, swing bands in Buchenwald and Terezin. European repressions of jazz were far worse than American ignorance and neglect of jazz. Merely shunned in the United States, but pursued, bedeviled, and outlawed by the fascist rulers of Europe, jazz became a recognized cultural force there decades ago, and only now may be achieving high cultural respectability here. It was not the repression that established jazz in European culture, although, strangely, it may have helped to ingrain it. Europeans seem to have grasped the significance of the music almost from the moment of its recognizability as a distinct idiom, as far back as 1919, when Ernest Ansermet, the great Swiss conductor, wrote of Sidney Bechet's "rich inventiveness," and "bold, disconcerting freshness." It is a commonplace of jazz history that the first sensitive critics of the music were Europeans. Early American evaluations of jazz were conducted on the level of show business publications specializing in weekly grosses and the doings of movie stars.

When the young Skvorecky was discovering Duke Ellington, Jimmy Lunceford, Chick Webb, Andy Kirk, and the Casa Loma band (he and his friends thought Casa Loma was the band leader), appreciation of jazz was

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*Album notes to "Dig," Miles Davis, Prestige 24054.



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an established component of the make-up of many cultured Europeans, from Aldous Huxley to André Malraux. At the same time in the United States, it was generally considered, at best, quaint.

For the narrator of "The Bass Saxophone," life in his little Czech town is dominated on the one hand by the Nazi occupation and on the other by his preoccupation with the fact and lore of jazz, hearing it, playing it, dreaming of half-mythical figures like Armstrong, Ellington, Webb, Eddie Condon, Bix Beiderbecke, and Adrian Rollini. He has never heard Rollini, has never heard a bass saxophone, but he fantasizes Rollini's prowess on this brontosaurus of the reed family. He then unexpectedly catches a glimpse of a bass saxophone, only to discover it belongs to a German band brought in to entertain the Nazi officers. Mesmerized by "a mechanism of strong, silver-plated wires, the gears, the levers, like the mechanism of some huge and absolutely nonsensical apparatus, a fantasy of some crazy mixed-up inventor," he risks the ostracism of his townsmen and punishment by the Germans for a chance to inspect the instrument, to try it out, and ultimately to substitute in disguise for the mysterious bass saxophonist of the visiting German band. At a grotesquely staged concert, the bass saxophonist appears and demands the restoration of his chair and his instrument. Through a solo of mind-blowing ferocity, power, and daring, he annoys and offends his Nazi audience, which had been enjoying Bavarian oompah music. But for the Czech boy the moment is an epiphany in which the central truth of his life is forged. A fascination with jazz is transformed through revelation into a faith that recognizes only fidelity, purity, and sacrifice. Skvorecky is writing about what he calls "the desperate scream of youth" that will always be inside us when we have been touched with the indelible truth of art.

It is a simple story told with complexity and beauty. Skvorecky's writing has rhythms that seem to grow out of the music he loves; long, lyrical, sentences relieved by short interior phrases that punctuate and comment upon the central ideas. While the technique has obvious precedents in modern literature, Skvorecky's application of it is musical even in the book's other story, "Emöke," which is not essentially about music. His musical imagery, however, is always close at hand: ". . . her kitchen too was an island of security where she became an artist, a virtuoso with absolute pitch for tastes and odors, like a violinist can tell a quarter tone and even an eighth, not rationally but intuitively, with a sense that others don't have and can't have . . ."

The author's quick, intensive, development of the characters in "The Bass Saxophone" and "Emöke" is consummate, his descriptive writing stunning. The most incidental figures seem fully alive and intimately known after only a few strokes of description. The members of the bizarre, almost hallucinatory German orchestra in "The Bass Saxophone" emerge as clear and stark as the characters in a George Grosz drawing. The few minor usage problems in the book, as in "like" for "as" in the above example, may be errors of translation. One serious mistake, "Charlie Bird" for Charlie Parker, whose nickname was "Bird," should have been caught by the editor.

Skvorecky's upper level themes, the importance of jazz in European culture, the difficulties and possibilities of expression under repression, are impressively developed.But the underlying revelation of the book is in the beauty of the climax of "The Bass Saxophone," the young man's blazing recognition of the truth he must follow. Skvorecky enters the current American literary scene as a purveyor of an unusual classicism of feelings and a masterful communicator of his own message. □

## Art

# *Petit* Man in a Derby: Toulouse-Lautrec in Chicago

Why did *La Belle Epoque* go down in the annals of history as *belle?* If an artist, suffused with the sense of a drawn line and an equally engrossing sense of color, sets out to explore ugliness as a source of beauty—strange things happen on canvas, and, in this instance, on cardboard. An epoch becomes a gorgeous one, with no more title to it than many others, and it dawns on us that, logic and intelligence notwithstanding, there is a certain luminousness to what may appear unprepossessing at first glance.

We do not know whether Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec ever had a retrospective of 109 of his works under one roof, in France or elsewhere. But the Art Institute of Chicago has had them all for two months and the exhibition has been mobbed since its opening.

Some argue that Toulouse-Lautrec, with his off-beat manners and habits, and his love for the rather crass hedonism of *maisons de tolerance* and popular music halls, could be hailed as a patron saint of the current narcissistic laissez faire and its unhinged aesthetic anarchy. Nothing of the sort. Assembled in one display, Toulouse-Lautrec immerses the viewer in his universe in an unexpected way. This universe is seemingly limited by its brothel-cum-underworld cast of characters, but its narrowness is deceptive. It soon expands in even a skeptical consciousness to encompass so much sadness of vice, the strange wisdom of the uncomely, the grievous virtues of the unsightly, that its very humanity can no longer be questioned or doubted. How it is that the richness



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of color and fascination with the linear do not lend glamor to the hideous, but at the same time do not strip ugliness of dignity—we do not know, but it is all there. The *demi-chanteuses* and *demi-mondaines,* coarse and human, repelling and alluring, and their patrons, top-hatted and sallow, compose themselves into a panorama of an era which we have agreed to call beautiful, though we do not know why, but we know that the adjective may be correct—thanks to M. Toulouse-Lautrec. And no longer is the beauty submerged in the impressionistic fuzz that was present in Toulouse-Lautrec's early paintings. It seems clear and distinct in the inimitable brushstrokes that look like strokes of crayon. Toulouse-Lautrec's consistency of tone amidst a visual abundance of forms and hues is unique—La Goulue suddenly becomes a Shakespearean presence, Jane Avril's cancan unexpectedly unveils the future of modern graphics, the tyrannical role of lithography and poster in the world to come after she and her art have become but a memory. It's stunning to see the Aristide Bruant placard and discover how much better it is in the original print than in even the most refined reproductions of Skira and Abrams. The stunted, sickly cripple grows into a giant, the first, perhaps, to create a linear poetry of art and imbue it with an instinct for color which we now savor like succulent fruit. (CC) □

### The Freedom of Self-Expression

Before Manhattan "artist" Jo Roman committed what she called her "self-termination" with an overdose of Seconal, she spent her last night drinking farewell toasts with friends and family, who—knowing what she was about to do—did nothing to stop her.

Ms. Roman decided that suicide is an art form, "taking command of life's brushstrokes," as she said. We have traveled far from the time when art was supposed to raise men's hearts and minds to a sense of what is majestic and noble, dignified and divine. We came thus from Dostoevsky's depictions of human scum to Hitler's pornography to Andy Warhol's drug-art—to Jo Roman. If life is absurd, as Camus believed, the only choices are stoicism, animalism and suicide. Camus embodied the stoic, and won the Nobel Prize, but never sorted out the vague palpitation in his logic, that is, the possibility that someone else's view of reality might be closer to the truth than his. So it is with Ms. Roman: she and her friends believed she was an artist to the end; others believe she, and they, were insane. But a distinction is necessary. It is one thing to diagnose a suicide as schizophrenic, another to allow one to proceed. Those who knew of Jo Roman's impending drug overdose, yet did nothing to stop her, are connoisseurs of Jo Roman's kind of "art." To us, they are carriers of the foremost disease of our time. (EJW) □

## Correspondence

# Letter from Italy: The Loveliness of Timelessness

by Thomas Molnar

A year ago, Mgr. Lefebvre, labeled "controversial" because the liberals in the Church did not like orthodoxy, gave a lecture in Rome at the palace of the Countess Pallavicini—with loudspeakers carrying his voice to hundreds on the street. Daughter of a merchant family from Genova (Medici by name but unrelated to the Florentines), the countess married the Marquis of Pallavicini, now dead. Stricken by paralysis some twenty years ago and now in a wheelchair, she has been active in "integrist" Catholic circles. When Cardinal Poletti expressed indignation that she would organize a Lefebvre "event" within earshot of the Vatican (Paul VI was still alive), the outspoken lady wrote back suggesting that Poletti mind his own business.

The palazzo is on the Quirinale (one of the Seven Hills), a hundred steps from the residence of the president of the Republic. It has vast gardens, innumerable halls, chambers and corridors, and those majestic staircases in which Italian architects always excelled. The Volpe Foundation's Seventh International Congress was held, on the Countess's invitation, in a grand, all-marble room with a Pallavicini pope's red-and-gold woven emblem behind the podium.

The Volpe encounters, always held in April when Rome is sunny but still cool, have three outstanding features: the intellectual, the musical and the mundane. The latter, because soon after the ladies—wives, daughters, friends—take their seats, a spring fashion parade softly underlines the reasoning of scholars from the rostrum. On the second evening a choir performs. This time, "The Passion" according to St. John, by Francisco Corteccia, a 17th-century composer, for me a discovery. The topic

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of this Volpe encounter was "Order and Disorder." Philosophers, lawyers, economists, politologues and artists—they seemed like a defiance of the Red Brigade in a city where practically siege conditions prevail: six bombs went off in various districts the night before the opening.

Two schools of thought emerged from the start: the *positivistic* one, defining order as following from the nature of reality, and a *metaphysical* one, assuming a transcendent pattern and proposing its values as norms for individual and community. The first position was presented by Prof. Julien Freund (Strassbourg) and the exiled Rumanian novelist, Vintila Horia (Madrid), the second by philosopher of law, Michel Villey (Sorbonne), G. Morra (Bologna) and myself.

It was perhaps not a surprise that the second argumentation slowly prevailed, a sign that the Italians, French and Germans present have not been seduced by the climate of what one may generally call "scientism." In fact, it was a young biologist whose critique of Horia's exaggerated cultural optimism, based on the nondeterministic physics of Heisenberg, Bohr and Gonseth, stunned the audience most. Professor Guardi pointed out that scientists entertain no vast designs transferable to philosophical speculation, but are interested in localized problems. He demolished the view that the "two cultures" may learn from each other and are destined to proceed in unison. For indeed, a capricious change of orbits by Heisenberg's protons has nothing to do with the proof of God's existence and man's freedom.

Prof. Claude Polin (Sorbonne), author of a recent *Esprit totalitaire,* directed a similarly decisive critique at Freund's too-sharp distinction between an "imperious" order (the way things are) and the "imperative" order, derived from an unknowable God. If no bridge exists between the two, then the lower order, so Polin argued, becomes pedestrian and arbitrary. It was perhaps Giovanni Volpe's wisdom that the conference which opened with Freund's lecture, could end with mine on the subject of order and creation, concluding the switch from the first to the second worldview.

In the general debate, the philosopher Augusto del Noce gave his interpretation of the crisis in neognostic terms, a lady from the audience had the idea of defending Esperanto. The rights of the national languages—even over Latin—were reasserted by art historian Carlo Belli; I remarked that the Budapest uprising would have been unimaginable in a "supranational" idiom, and Prof. Pierre Boutang cited de Gaulle's contempt for an apatride "volapuk."

The Countess Pallavicini attended most of the debates, wheeled in by a liveried butler. Various personalities from the political, journalistic and artistic world came and went, old acquaintances surfaced, books were inscribed by authors, gossip exchanged, and restaurant addresses passed on as if in confidence. In general, the Urbs intruded at all stages: Rome, the lovely and never-old courtesan, is not disfigured even by the warts of terrorism and tourism on her face. In the midst of exploding bombs, fights between students and police, legions of pilgrims for Holy Week—the city remained lovely and open, the shop windows elegant (and even more so in Bologna and Venice), the restaurants full, the Spanish Steps sunk in flowers.

A new feature: the Pope is everywhere, more popular than John XXIII. His photographs are in all the shops, crowds surround him wherever he goes, in the towns he visits they cry "Please come back again!" Leftist papers have stopped attacking him for fear of turning him into a "rightist" pope whom the voters would then follow to the "other camp." In Venice, a few days later, I heard under my hotel window a drunk on one of the small bridges over the canal declaim for hours: "Papa polacco, papa communista." So there you have it. Anyway, I am not sure that the pontiff's sudden stardom is a good thing. Is any personality cult a good thing?

* * *

Bologna, with its arcaded sidewalks, has a communist municipality, red voters in the suburbs, bourgeois opulence and active church life in the center. Marxist parties are gaining increasing power in many important cities of Italy, France, and now Spain too. But it must be said that Bologna is kept perfectly clean, even though the much-advertised "free public transportation" (a dream from Marx to Khrushchev) is a false myth. Padua, too, is a bourgeois city—with a lot of communist voters and the renowned university where the Aristotelians used to enter battle against the partisans of Averroës. Now eleven thousand out of twelve thousand students are psychology majors, and political science professor Antonio Negri has just been arrested for masterminding the kidnap and assassination of Aldo Moro. *Otherwise,* the university is quiet, and the old waiter of Il Pedrocchio, a 19th-century café with marble-top tables, red plush banquettes and a bourgeois public sipping tea and eating pastry, says resignedly: "No disorders—today . . ."

I lectured in Pordenonne, Trieste, Venice. Left-wing pedagogues smiled painfully when, in the course of the questions/answers, I mentioned that I am hardly a democrat. In contrast, Trieste, bordering on Yugoslavia, is right wing: Tito is so near that the main topic of conversation is the hope for his survival for another and another year. Here too, the 19th-century bourgeois character is evident: the starch-collared hotel concierge, the coffee-pastry in the afternoon, the monumentally solid insurance company buildings, the French-speaking *politesse* of my hosts, friends and public. Trieste, the old Austro-Hungarian port city, now without a hinterland other than the communist countries, is said to be agonizing, its population of 300,000 dwindling. If so, this is not visible on the busy streets. But again, everything



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depends on Tito's health; if it fails, the exodus will be panicky. The Soviet hordes are near, and Carter's geography can hardly be trusted. Like Gerald Ford's.

Each time I approach Venice, I feel the excitement of a first rendezvous with a beautiful woman. Venice, like Rome, cannot be conquered. Palaces here seem to harbor the secrets of invincibility. Humid, algae-covered exteriors, Renaissance or 17th-century luxury inside, coldly monumental, ancient solid wealth. I lectured in the French consulate on the origin and power of intellectuals. Afterwards, I was praised (in Venice vanity grows like the green moss lapped by the lagoon) for the courage of denouncing Marxism and the leftist professors, some of whom were in the audience. I even mentioned the Paduan Antonio Negri, that week's "victim" of the "system's inhumanity." The *doyenne* of a French university department, who has Marx's photo on her desk and that night wore a red poncho, made a few compliments, with cold disgust in her eyes.

My train was to leave at midnight for Rome, where I could catch the flight to New York, thus beating the railway strike scheduled to start later in the day. But there was still time for a farewell dinner with a daughter of the pre-1914 director of the Paris Opera. The lovely old lady occupies a wing of the Palazzo Mocenigo where Giordano Bruno, who foolishly returned to Venice after having lectured in Protestant Europe, was arrested by the Inquisition. To be exact, it's also where Byron idled on the *terrace loggia.* The spirit of eternal Venice, its treachery and languished raptures, is still there. □

# Letter from New Orleans: Preservation Hall, Its Septuagenarians and Consequences

by E. Stake Salisbury

Everybody knows that the inner cities are decaying and disintegrating. They are slowly dying under the onslaught of stifling priorities, poverty, neglect, crime, cultural indifference and civic callousness. The French Quarter is perhaps the only exception in America. It refuses to deteriorate, even under the nonstop assault of the most destructive of all modern urban plagues—tourism. What's the Crescent City's recipe for this minimiracle? It's hard to say, as it's quite doubtful that more municipal funds are directed toward the support and upkeep of architectural gracefulness and the sentimentalities of this city's landscape than are budgeted in Boston, New York or Philadelphia. It can be argued that the New Orleans ambience has a sturdy ingredient of self-perpetuation, like Paris, Florence or some parts of Manhattan: at a certain point, it seeped over into people's behavior and lifestyles and originated a particular type of local patriot, often an immigrant from another city or region who found a spiritual motherland here. But whenever I am here, I have a distinct feeling that something more, and more complex, is at the core, something difficult to pinpoint and describe, yet which is palpable in the visual splendors, the sweetness of the air, the gourmet ravenousness with which one approaches meals, and that elusive feeling of nondescript gaiety that one experiences the moment one enters the Quarter and which accompanies one even in places suffocated by tourist noise and triviality.

Those semimystical forces in the life and fate of a city make good conversation among exalted visitors. The real difference between one town and another is the confluence of a city's charms with concrete human endeavors and achievements. Like Preservation Hall, for instance. After some 16 years of existence, it has become more than a household word in New Orleans; in fact, it is now a household word throughout the entire country and beyond. It may be mentioned as often by incoming crowds in the lobbies of all the Hiltons, Sheratons, Holiday Inns and Marriotts as the St. Louis Cathedral and Antoine's, Galatoire's and Cabildo, the Jackson Monument and Café du Monde, St. Charles Avenue and Congo Square, the Superdome and Beauregard House; or perhaps repeated even more often and with more excitement. It has advanced to the status of a New Orleans colloquial symbol—not a meager career for a jazz hang-out in a city full of celebrated cultural souvenirs.

But is the Hall just a jazz spot, as simple as that? Preservation Hall is the brain child of Allan Jaffe, a Philadelphian, in whose body of an overweight prizefighter dwells the tender soul of an artist and an entrepreneurish empire builder rolled into one. He has the face of a softhearted Marine sergeant from the Hollywood movies of the '30s, and a lot of indomitable ruthlessness combined with the most *menschlich* responses and compassions. Allan has loved jazz since infancy; he came to New Orleans as a young, impoverished student with his wife Sandra, and began the life of an American expatriate in Vieux-Carré. He loved to be there and strike friendships, mostly with black musicians who were old enough to remember better times, but who did not make it on the scale of Oliver, Armstrong, Bechet or Jelly Roll (all New Orleans natives), and who by then were working at odd jobs. There were forgotten and truncated giants among them, like George Lewis, with far from nation-wide recognition, but who had the potential for a very, very late blooming —and Allan saw it in them. He convinced them that they could start again, in a dingy 200-year-old St. Peter Street townhouse in the very center of Vieux-

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Carré that was adorned with nothing but the accumulated and ennobling dirt of decades. He established an artistic credo: Purity, Poignancy and Tradition —and ruthlessly went about cultivating and preserving it. Not too consciously, I presume, he sensed that there was a cultural treasure in having septuagenarians play with syncopated and improvisational excellence, faithful to their almost dogmatic canon of musical heritage. The generosity of his untiring efforts, together with his fascination with their results, was what Allan had to offer New Orleans, and the city knew how to accept it. One must notice that it all happened in the '60s, when Allan —fighting fiercely with his musicians' arthritis or sclerosis and for their elementary financial survival—promoted the cult of precious oldness. At exactly the same time, Mr. Sammler, the great philosopher from Saul Bellow's novel, was cruelly crucified for his age and wisdom at Columbia University by the frantic cohorts of the youth cultists, who invaded the American civilization and maimed it to the extent which even now, 10 years later, is still felt. And Allan won: a Yippie of today is a manic-farcical occurrence, while Willie Humphrey, way into his seventies, gathers pious admiration from today's teenagers, who sit cross-legged on Preservation Hall's grimy floor and inhale "Just a Closer Walk with Thee." Apparently, precious oldness never ages.

There are other consequences. This time, I observed a new breed of young street musicians on the Quarter's corners. The last decade was cluttered with youth in contrived attire—from ragged military gear to tuxedo-cum-jeans to Peruvian bowlers-on-Newport-socialites —who spouted their drugged political rock platitudes around St. Mark's Place or Haight-Ashbury. Something different can now be seen around the Pontalba Buildings. Young men dressed like hardhats at a labor union convention play instrumental music all around—blues and bop and cool jazz—in a joyous but unobtrusive manner, mindful of small contributions, but very much concentrating on the flawlessness of an improvisational solo. On a Sunday afternoon, at the corner of Royal and Conti, I especially enjoyed a young man in a Pendleton shirt and Florsheim black dress shoes, whose rendition of "Frankie and Johnny" made me stop and listen. He used a weird sort of electronic zither with an amplifier for accompaniment. "What's that?" I asked. "An autoharp," he answered sternly, as if surprised by my ignorance. "It's made by the Pennsylvania Dutch." I must admit that his version of the sinister old ballad sounded quite cheerful, optimistic, and rejuvenated with the help of that peculiar instrument. It became quite clear to me how much the Quarter is under the sway of Preservation Hall, Jaffe and their unintentional conservatism. □

## The American Proscenium

### *The Visit*

Pope John Paul II came to America for a visit. He was the central figure in a six-day drama and brought a message. The drama turned out to be a projection of personal warmth infused with moral authority in a manner unknown in this century. Millions of people responded avidly and, taking into account the Pope's prior feats in Mexico and behind the Iron Curtain in Poland, he has clearly emerged as a world leader on a scale yet to be assessed by history.

Wojtyla's message was that purity of faith and doctrine is the most reliable weapon in the crucial fight for human civilization against the forces of totalitarianism in the East and nihilism in the West. American liberals, progressives, feminists, utopians, relativists, sloganeers and theologian-rock-singers decided not to let him get away with this. Thus, at the prayer service at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, one Sister Theresa Kane, president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, sternly instructed the Pope to admit women to "all the ministries of our church." Sister Kane believes that "the top social ills of our society are sexism and racism." This is no small progress from the Scriptures, in which we can find only the dull and outmoded opinion that "Sin maketh nations miserable." We can assume that the contemporary contempt for the salvation of souls, an overwhelming concern for sages and saints throughout Christianity's history, is a social ill of minor consequence in her scale of things. Sister Theresa, according to the *Chicago Tribune,* "was smartly dressed in a brown suit and beige blouse" when she embarked on teaching the pontiff her lesson.

The reporting of the episode sheds a further light on the press' peculiar manipulation of democracy, statistics and opinion-forming practices. According to the same *Tribune,* of 5,000 nuns present at the service, only 50 rose up to show their solidarity with Sister Theresa's entreaty. This is 1% of the audience. However, the *Tribune* allowed two nuns to voice their support for Sister Theresa and two for the Pope. This looks pretty much like a draw in the battle of canonical views, but only to a naive eye. To journalistic sophisticates, it was obvious that Sister Theresa's opinions soundly trounced those of the Pope: her supporters were permitted the space to elaborate eloquently and at length on the superiority of Catholic feminism, while those on Wojtyla's side were permitted only a limited reservation that was made to sound both feeble and feeble-minded. As the *Chicago Tribune* obviously liked the drama better than the message, its reportorial mechanism of suppressive censorship demanded that those opinions which did not fit the mold of liberal-totalitarian



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militancy be skillfully subdued.

But these are trivial matters, as many suspect. The more unsettling suspicion is that the media's liberal commentators have embarked on a devious campaign that is designed to drive a wedge between the drama and the message. After his visit, most of the media complained that there was a queer contradiction between a pastor who was so charismatic, so human and humane, so propeople, propeace and antiviolence—and the fact that he was embracing such obsolete views on principles, morals, existential conduct within and without the Church. The disconsolate writers at *Time* magazine wondered how they could reconcile those immense crowds with the fact that "... the U.S. is a pluralist, secular, sexually permissive society, and in the past two decades Americans have come to view with suspicion all institutions and authority, social, political or religious."

It would be difficult to find a more striking example of the liberal press' cynicism and prevarication than *Time's* mixture of demi-intelligence and ill will, ignorance and falsehood. There's no conflict between American pluralism and the Pope's universalism: after all, Catholic, which means universal, denotes an enlarged vision of pluralism, even if the history of Catholicism contains some chapters of exclusionary fanaticism. Whether America is secular can be largely disputed; the separation of church and state does not presume a society divorced from religion, as the American 19th century amply demonstrated. Our sexually permissive society was brought about during the '60s and '70s by the enthusiastic accounts by *Time* and its media confreres of every kind of behavioral aberration. Besides, we do not truly know how much of the American society is sexually permissive, since *Time,* and its colleagues, lavishly report on Esalen, vaginal art, est, Studio 54 and male stripteasers, but ignore any example of contrary mores; thus we do not know what segment of this society practices Manhattan-Los Angeles-San Francisco manners, and how many are avoiding defloration at twelve—the latter is not newsworthy and so becomes a part of the mass of suppressed truth. Those polls which debunk *Time's* image of this society are naturally played down, if not passed over in silence. The same technique applies to respected institutions and effective authority: *Time* does not like them, thus the yearning for them does not exist in the picture of America which is officially prescribed by the liberal media establishment in New York City.

Then the Pope comes and millions of people suddenly seem to crave authority, institutions, coherence, normalcy, tradition—and a leader who would be able to restore them to their natural role in society. A *Chicago Tribune* columnist called it "magic," with a sort of undigested bitterness. But isn't it time that other people of good intentions notice these cravings? Isn't it time that an American, or a group of Americans, should continue what Wojtyla so propitiously initiated? (CC)

### *The Brigade*

Over the last few months, plenty of people in the U.S. have agonized over what to do with the Soviet combat brigade stationed in Cuba. Most want to do something about it, though no one is absolutely positive about what should be done. A substantial amount of enlightened, pragmatic, sober, seasoned, well-informed, erudite, expert and liberal columnists, commentators, analysts, Kremlinologists, specialists, savants, scholars, intellectuals and intellectualoids have been firmly repeating that the Soviet encampment is of little importance, that a Soviet military unit 90 miles off Miami Beach does not pose any threat to our security, let alone to the luxury hotels along Collins Avenue.

They just keep forgetting that in our time's global strategy and tactical planning, image counts as much as fact, or, perhaps, even more.

### *An Anniversary*

The fortieth anniversary of the beginning of World War II recently passed without much comment. The anniversary of another event intimately related to that war passed almost totally unnoticed. The conclusion of the Nazi-Soviet "nonaggression" pact, nominally a "peace" agreement, but actually a deal for a German-Soviet partition of Eastern Europe, was the immediate trigger of the world's greatest war. It completed the work of that other great "peace" agreement, the Munich pact, though at least at Munich one party imagined that it was obtaining peace. Curiously, Munich remains rather more vivid in recollection.

In 1938, the Red Army's Director of Military Intelligence for Western Europe, General Walter Krivitsky, defected to the West to escape Stalin's slaughter of the Soviet officer corps. In an article published in the Russian exile journal *Socialist Courier,* Krivitsky warned that Stalin wanted to reach an agreement with Hitler, and had already made feelers for this through trade missions to Berlin. His story has since been confirmed by captured Nazi documents. His warning was greeted by the liberal crooners in the Western press with the same disgust as they now use to dismiss objections to the unverifiability of the SALT II agreements.

The true story of the prelude to World War II is not just more interesting than its fashionable versions, but it is perhaps of considerable relevance to our own time. After all, the West today, as in the 1930s, is confronted by not one, but two totalitarian states which are utterly hostile to it and which hate each other. And both of these states follow essentially Stalinist premises in their foreign policies, the Chinese openly and proudly, the Soviets more quietly. (Even Khrushchev never repudiated any important part of Stalin's *foreign* policy, and his successors have partly rehabilitated Stalin.) Of course the situation today is quite different in its geographic



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and power aspects. The U.S.S.R. and China confront each other directly; no hapless Eastern Europe is caught between them. Also, China is still far weaker than either the Soviet Union or the West, and is hardly capable of pursuing openly aggressive policies except against a few of its immediate neighbors in Southeast Asia. (It is curious, incidentally, that China's aid, including troops, to the Burmese communist rebels stirred far less interest than its open attack on its totalitarian neighbor in Indochina.) But the maneuvers, calculations and miscalculations of 1939 should provide food for thought for our leaders if we are to avoid even more horrible catastrophes in the future. (AJL)

### *Kennedy*

If Edward Kennedy is nominated and elected, American history could very possibly enter a phase of decline. For the first time, America will have a president who is an insult to what America once stood for and what made it great.

There have been mediocre men in the gallery of American presidents, there have also been those who did not deserve the office. However, each of them made it to the highest office on some merit, be it for such secondary characteristics as doggedness or manipulative cunning. Both of Edward Kennedy's brothers—one who achieved the prize, the other who did not, though he came very close to it—must be credited with personal qualities that justified their presence in the highest reaches of American politics. Edward Kennedy arrived there solely on the coattails of his family's prominence. During his entire public career he has never demonstrated a capability for lifting himself above the Kennedy political device—which means getting elected through a combination of money, family power and massive public relations activity. There's no single public deed or opinion of importance with which he can be credited.

Except for the resounding scandals and transgressions of his private life. But the obvious proof of Edward Kennedy's moral and mental limitations curiously has worked for his political benefit. It has turned him into a media artifact whom the communication industry, by nature morally color blind and contemptuous toward civic virtuousness, has accepted as a source of mass entertainment, easily marketable and saleable. Edward Kennedy has thus emerged as a revered object of political sentimentality, the mainstay of American journalism's financial success. His mendacious and half-hearted expiations for sleazy and not-so-sleazy trespasses have suddenly become proof of his force of character: his cynical careerism, nepotistic in origin, has become, in the pages of national magazines, a testimony to his moral renaissance and spiritual strength. He now presides over a political corporation founded on family wealth, studded with clients and acolytes, which, so far, has been powerful enough to cover up what happened at Chappaquiddick and paralyze any possible investigation. If America chooses him as president, this nation's claim to greatness will be discarded not by fate or human mistakes, but by the vulgar abandonment of any criteria which make nations worthy of succeeding. □

# Journalism

## Who Makes News?

Nicholas von Hoffman, a columnist with a particular talent for combining a good deal of cleverness with a bit of dullness and a lot of arrogance, aptly wrote, not long ago, that "storms in the South Atlantic are not of ABC making" and that "the network . . . is merely reporting the news, not causing it or staging it." Nevertheless, he discovers dishonesty when the media conduct their own public opinion polls on elections, candidates and political events and then peddle the results as news. He finds such practices unethical, or perhaps even worse—obnoxious.

Columnist von Hoffman fails to make a subtler linguistic distinction between making, causing, staging and creating the news. The last seems to us the most perverting aspect of the media's perverse powers. They certainly do not command hurricanes, but they unmistakably can create giant waves of licentiousness, fashionable dementia, murderousness, senseless crime, pornography-related raping sprees, terrorism for publicity's sake, etc. It's very easy to prove how this mechanism of socially disseminated trends operates in our reality. We have written about it many times. We can mail detailed charts on request. Mr. von Hoffman, if interested, can obtain one for free. □

## Open and Triumphant Procommunism

The people in and around the *Progressive* magazine, from Wisconsin, have declared their "victory" over the U.S. government in a case which is celebrated to some and infamous to others, concerning what some call censorship and others call civic and moral responsibility. Their jubilation is made possible by the *Progressive's* collective frame of mind: the people who write and edit it are openly procommunist, and do not consider the U.S. government *theirs,* even if they use the possessive pronoun for camouflage, as is proven in a line by Mr. Howard Morland, their principal spokesman in this instance:

> ". . . the blame for the arms race lies with our own government, not with



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the Russians."

This seals off the case and perfectly denotes the moral and political smell that fills the *Progressive's* quarters and pages. And then some Americans wonder why, after such an abuse of freedoms and privileges, overzealous avengers of national decency launch their fateful raids. Like Senator McCarthy. From Wisconsin. □

## Apocalypse Now!

A frightened writer for the *Village Voice,* that seismograph of the radical left in America, issues a call to arms in a long feature on the Pope's visit:

"The political implications of the Pope's tour frightened me. The energy in Yankee Stadium made the energy that drove the rock concerts and the demonstrations of the '60s seem puny. And in the vivid silence that filled the stadium while the Pope spoke, the rumble of a subway passing made me think of the sound that precedes an avalanche. The church is an institution which predated the secularization of government, and John Paul II has made no comforting statements about the separation of church and state. At best his American visit will set back the ERA and unleash a zealous army of abortion foes. At worst . . . I don't like to think about it."

Why not place a long distance call to the Red Brigades? Would that help? □

# Liberal Culture

### *Rebellion as Usual*

Revolutions are still *en vogue,* though ties have gotten narrower and women are accentuating the waistline. In September, a modish antinuke upheaval took place in Manhattan. It was a giant disco, a fashionable event. People came to sing and dance, the neutron became the most *in* word of the happening: besides its mobilizing force, it can serve to describe so many hip things.

There's something of the medieval, or Salemlike, witch-hunt spirit in the phenomenon of the antinuclear protest. There's no rational or empirical reason for the fierceness of *this* opposition—as compared to the Vietnam protests, where a reason, albeit a faulty one, could be perceived. There are no current casualties in the nuclear field, there never have been, and perhaps there never will be. But there's a fear of unmaterialized facts—exactly like the fear of witchcraft. No Puritan could ever prove the witches' abuse of godliness, because their kind of supernatural power did not exist. But the fear of those abuses was real—and triggered by irrational fears, a worse abuse of reason, justice, correctness followed. The only things that separate the 17th-century Salem hysteria from the Manhattan rally are the participants' garb and the musical chants that bring them to a frenzy. Their mental equipment seems to be identical. When do we get to see some plays about this modern orgy of irrationalism and ignorance?

### Chicago Tribune's *Darling*

"What is irresistible about this fat, bearded, cheeky man is his unblemished frankness."

So begins a certain Helen Dudar's profile of the *Chicago Tribune's* apparently most beloved and promotion-worthy publisher. His name is Lyle Stuart, and he is best known in America as the publisher of *The Sensuous Woman.* He is also a multimillionaire, "has a flat in Paris, a house on Jamaica . . .," and, as the *Tribune* emphasizes with pious veneration, he gave America *History Will Absolve Me,* by Fidel Castro, and is "a veteran Castro-booster [who] recently acquired eight Cuban books 'just in defiance of the damn Treasury Department which says you can't do business with Cuba.' The package includes two novels plus *Memories of Che,* a collection he commissioned written by family and friends of the legendary Guevara."

" 'I really don't give a damn about anybody,' he says, flashing a toothy smile," the starry-eyed *Tribune* writer reports. That seems to be correct. Mr. Stuart also published *The Anarchist Cookbook*—"a manual for basement bomb makers that still sells 14,000 copies a year," the *Tribune* informs us with giddy enthusiasm. We can safely assume that some of the killing and maiming from the random bombings which have occurred since the publication date were magnanimously assisted by Mr. Stuart's expertly printed advice; his millions reek just slightly of blood. But this seems to be of little importance to the *Trib* and its vaunted sense of values.

### *Welcome Aboard!*

"Basically, I'm an optimist. The nice thing about capitalism is that it lends itself to an infinity of patching up. If it were subject to the rigors of principle assumed by either the right or the left, it would have ended long ago. So we may have more convulsions, and more pragmatic patching up, and the patching up will enable it to survive. Now you have my final bit of wisdom: Capitalism will survive."

Who's that? Adam Smith, Esq.? John Rockefeller at a séance? A quote from a just-unearthed letter of Henry Ford to his progeny? Perhaps Joseph Schumpeter, who has suddenly changed opinions? Milton Friedman, in an unexpectedly suave bit of prose? Or Hayek, or Röpke, or the chairman of the Mobil Oil Corporation in one of those ads penned by sophisticated literati?



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No, no and no. It's that old *farceur,* Prof. Dr. John Kenneth Galbraith. Now we are, of course, delighted with his born-again faith in the free market, but we are a little disturbed that he calls optimism about capitalism a bit of his wisdom. If *his* wisdom tells him that things are O.K., we may have some reason to worry.

### *Lovable Cultism*

Strange how liberalism—once the fearless debunker of fundamentalist sorceries and seedy faith healers, the implacable foe of the Elmer Gantrys of this land—has changed during the last two decades. We now have the tender remembrance of Reverend Jones, who flourished among the liberals and in the most liberal of all cities. Cultism is in the fold of liberal virtues, defended as the people's right to "know" and "feel," draped in the pseudoscientific chutzpah of Werner Erhard and adored by New York publishers. And *The New Republic* loves Mrs. Ruth Carter Stapleton.

We know it's quite a change, but how else can we explain this journal's review of Mrs. Stapleton's opus, entitled *Brother Billy,* which calls it a "most amiable anecdote and family reminiscence." And nothing else, in the entire review, is said that would justify Mrs. Stapleton's portraiture of herself and her brothers as the most refined products of the evolution of the species.

We are not liberals, thus to us Mrs. Ruth Carter Stapleton symbolizes the worst in America. Rarely have obscurantism, ignorance and pushy stupidity —common to all mankind, but unfortunately best observable in certain segments of our society—achieved a better expression than in Mrs. Stapleton's book. The vaunted liberal fumigators never notice the smog of low-brow "dialectics" which infuses everything about the Carters; the liberal media call it a lovable warmheartedness and concern for the people.

How things have changed. Today, warlocks make the scene in the wealthy liberal salons of Georgetown and Gotham and in the pages of liberal journals once devoted to reason. Today, we nonliberals are the defenders of man, his dignity, his intelligence and his right to freedom from warlocks wherever they come from—political fanaticism, witchcraft, psychotherapy, grotesquely perverted religion.

### *Strange Days . . .*

"Strange days have tracked us down . . ." an ancient poet complained, mourning the failure of the Latin sense of reason. One could agree with such a lament now, when a person who wishes to atone for his sins is insulted by learned ACLU lawyers, the self-appointed conscience of America, who call him "quitter" and "chicken." The causists go into hysterical fits on TV and accuse a convicted murderer who demands his own execution of cowardice. The ACLU pundits seem to think that expiation for crimes, even having the courage to ask for one's own death, is antisocial and immoral. "Fighting the state and society" is moral, even if the fighter is a heinous mass-murderer. The odd case of Jesse Bishop, who was executed in Nevada for killing one man, sheds a bizarre light on the compassion business in America. It was revealed after his execution that he had also confessed to killing some 19 people just for a fee.

### *Finally, We're All There!*

According to UPI, a topless female passenger boarded a downtown Manhattan subway train on a recent sultry August night. Only one citizen let himself be heard, screaming: "Cover yourself up . . ." The female passenger, confident in her right as someone who had paid the fare for transportation, unperturbedly took a seat and smiled. None of the rest of her fellow riders could understand what all the fuss was about. □


Vol. 3, No. 1, January/February 1979
Accentuate the Negative

Vol. 3, No. 2, March/April 1979
On Conscience & Related Concerns

Vol. 3, No. 3, May/June 1979
The Oldest Conflict

Vol. 3, No. 4, July/August 1979
The Ugly Beautiful People

Vol. 3, No. 5, September/October 1979
Normalcy—Our Sixth Sense

Tyrmand: Editor's Comment; Pradl on Scott *(The Secret Six)*; Moser on Lasch *(The Culture of Narcissism)*; Navrozov on Richards *(Sweet Country)*; Rice on Stans *(The Terrors of Justice)*; Carson on Neier *(Defending My Enemy)*; Kolson on Weyr *(Reaching for Paradise)*; Walsh on Truscott *(Dress Gray)*; Schwartz on Johnson *(Lying Low)*; Levine on Colebrook *(Innocents of the West)*; Steinman on Hill *(Hanta Yo)*; Pietrusza on Drucker *(Adventures of a Bystander)*; Commendables; Waste of Money; Screen; Correspondence; Liberal Culture; The American Proscenium; Journalism; Polemics & Exchanges.


**Erratum**

In our previous issue (September/October 1979) in the Correspondence section, entitled "Letter From Paris," by Leo Raditsa, on page 33 the line which read ". . . Poland, for which England and France allegedly went to war," should have said ". . . Poland, for which England and France went to war."




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